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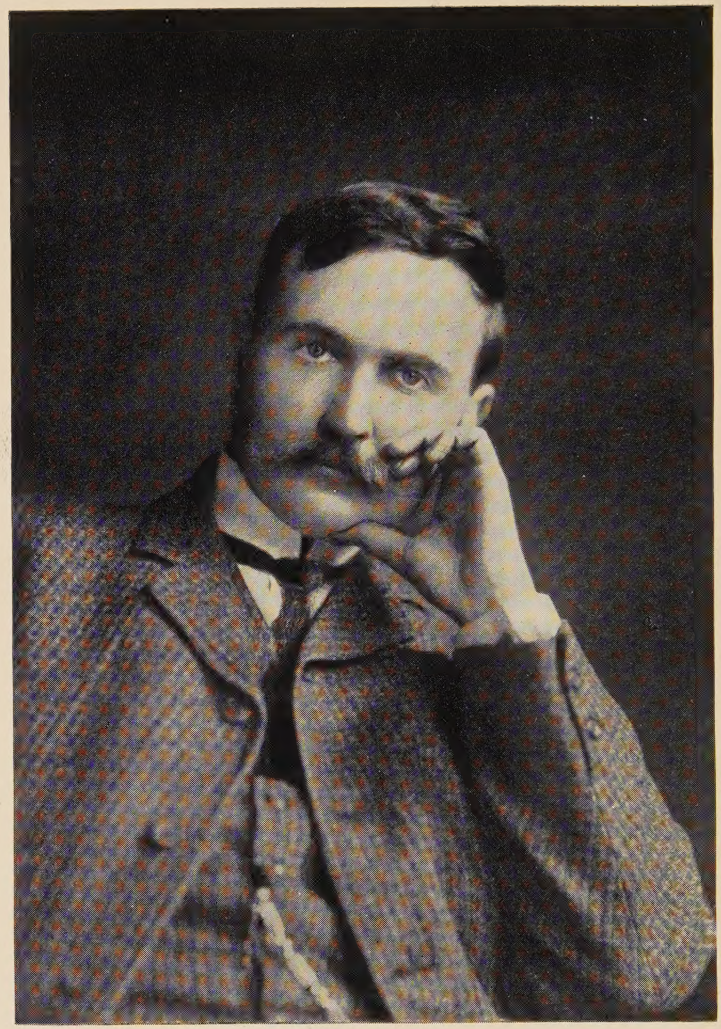

JOHN WILHELM ROWNTREE

Claim Your Inheritance

ESSAYS ON MAN'S RELATION TO GOD

by

JOHN WILHELM ROWNTREE

1868–1905

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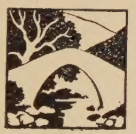

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Beloved, now are we the sons of God

1 JOHN, 3

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AR 3 1964

Introduction

By Gerald K. Hibbert

No apology is needed for re-publishing some of the writings of John Wilhelm Rowntree. Although it is over forty years since his death, and half-a-century since most of his essays were written, his prophetic message is as true and as needed today as ever. In one sense the real prophet is never out-of-date. The circumstances of his time naturally colour his thinking, and in certain details his message may undoubtedly "date," but his clearness of vision, his deep spiritual insight, his penetration to the very heart of Reality, remain a permanent inspiration and possession, dateless and timeless.

Such a prophetic soul was John Wilhelm Rowntree. Even though two cataclysmic wars have happened since his death in 1905, very little of what he wrote has lost its aptness for today. To the perplexed and frustrated spirits of our time (1948) this prophetic voice from the past comes bringing renewed hope and power. It is as fresh now as ever. Half a century ago it stirred the Society of Friends to the depths, and roused it to new life and activity. But that generation of Friends has for the most part passed away, and there are many Friends today who know little of this earlier prophet. It is in the hope—and with the certainty—that this message will grip our younger members in particular, and help any non-Friends who are in doubt, that these selections from his writings are now re-published. Not only to the Society of Friends will this message bring courage and inspiration, but to many in other Churches or

in none, honest seekers after Truth, perplexed pilgrims in the quest for Light. There must be thousands outside our Society to whom these words will come as a great release and liberation if once they read them.

The particular problems facing us today are of course different from those of fifty years ago. Then, two of the main problems were (1) the possibility of reconciling the hypothesis of Evolution with a belief in a Creator God, and (2) the Inspiration of the Bible. Darwin on the one hand, and the Higher Critics on the other, had caused considerable fluttering in ecclesiastic dove-cotes. These are not the problems of today: to a large extent they have been solved. Freud has replaced Darwin as a disturber of religious belief, and Scientific Humanism is just as upsetting as the Higher Criticism, if not more so. In the past half-century Psychology has made enormous strides, and seems to some to have proved religion to be illusion; while the Scientific Humanists have strenuously asserted once more that "all things come by Nature." It is true that with regard to both movements there have been modifications of recent years, due to criticism and further research, and the former "cock-sure tone" has been somewhat modified, yet there must be thousands of people who are upset in their faith by the atmosphere of these movements, and are unhappily floundering about in a morass of uncertainty. One cannot but believe that many such will find the message of this book to be both steadying and enlightening. It goes right down to the fundamentals.

Philosophically the relationship between Christ and God is difficult to define, and many conflicting attempts have been made to give an adequate interpretation of the Incarnation and of the Atonement. More and more is the emphasis being placed on the moral and spiritual identity of Christ and God as the vital factor. "I and my Father are one" means one in mind and will and purpose: the unity between them is moral rather than metaphysical.

This is the point of view taken by the writer of these essays. He says "Jesus puts forth the tremendous claim that He and the Father are one, that in other words love as we see it in Him is the *same* in character as the love of God himself." It is true that Jesus says "The Father is greater than I," that the Creator with His infinite power and knowledge is greater than the Creator self-limited in the flesh, but the love of God is not different *in kind* from the love of Jesus. It is along this line of thought that many will come to the conclusion that they can honestly call themselves Christians, rather than by accepting all the dogmas of "orthodox" Christianity—a course of action which they find to be totally impossible for them.

One other vital question remains: what is the ultimate authority in religion? If Friends reject external authority, such as the tradition of the Church or the words of Scripture, what have they to put in its place? Our answer would be "The Inward Light." This however has often been so misunderstood that it has at times been a cause of weakness rather than of strength to our Society, *e.g.* in the Hicksite separation in the United States. We do indeed believe in the Inward Light, and desperately do we need it; but is it merely an individual's whim or idiosyncrasy or opinion? If so, we are still left without any objective authority, nor can we find any ground for unity with our fellows. If the 20,000 Quakers in this country are 20,000 little Inner Lights, each claiming that his light is *the light*, where can we find agreement?

It is on this point that our author is peculiarly helpful. "If I give up external authority," he says, "I do not want to know only what man can be, but what God is, and I want to see within the limits of human consciousness an identification or meeting point between the soul of man and the unseen Spirit. If Jesus is that meeting point of identification—a movement not merely of man towards a God who never answers, but of God towards man—then,

with Jesus as the Gospel, witnessed in the conscience of a civilization infected by his Spirit, I see the balance wheel to the doctrine of the Inward Light." Here, it is urged, we find our ultimate authority, a living developing blend of the inward and the outward, the subjective and the objective, the immanent and the transcendent. We are not left to the mercy of our individual feelings: we have a standard—the Jesus of the Gospels, witnessed in the conscience of a civilisation infected by His Spirit—which helps us to check our individual "Inward Light" and keep it continually *in the life.* We accept the standard because it appeals to us as true by its own inherent excellence, and so it ceases to be purely external and becomes part of our very self.

The great value of these writings for today lies in the fact that they are the result of *experience,* not solely of theorising. The writer was one who, in the words of Rufus Jones concerning him, has *arrived.* After much struggling and fearless questioning he was one "who realised a companionship with God which transformed him through and through, and by divine assistance became a spiritual leader among us." We cannot allow his influence to vanish. We are in desperate straits today—materially and spiritually alike. "Lord, who will show us any good?" is our cry. We must have someone who *knows,* who speaks not from book-knowledge or tradition, but from first-hand experience. Such a one we find in John Wilhelm Rowntree. He was both mystic and evangelist (in the best and literal sense of the word). No Friend has emphasised the Inward Light more than he, yet he never forgot the need for all the outward Light that we could get—in tradition, in Scripture, in the realm of knowledge generally. His was not a bare, bleak, and negative mysticism. He used every available opportunity—travel, reading, contacts with his fellow-men—to develop and check his own Inward Light. He flung himself with ardour into the search for Truth:

"he warmed both hands before the fire of life," and so was able to warm the hands of others. Yet he was never merely a Humanist. He ever returned to his centre—Christ the revealer of God, and his main concern was to translate Christ into modern terms. He was first and foremost a Christian disciple, and his Quakerism was his interpretation and practical application of his fellowship with his Master.

The reader is asked to remember that the four lectures in this volume were *lectures* and not articles contributed to a magazine or chapters of a book. They were delivered in 1905, and the original form of a lecture has been kept throughout. The conversational informal note makes its own appeal. The four lectures appeared in *Man's Relation to God* published by Headley Bros., 1918.

A Friend's Tribute

By Rufus M. Jones

Busy as it is with material tasks, the world still listens to spiritual prophets, when once it is convinced that they actually are prophets, and have come, like an earlier one, "from God to bear witness to the Light." Nothing after all matters so much to serious men and women like us, in a world like ours, as do fresh revelations of God and convincing evidence that He is near us and for us and with us; and when one among us has come into intimate fellowship with Him and speaks with first-hand authority of what he has seen and handled, we are ready to give attention to his living words.

This tremendous hour has suddenly revealed the fact to us, as we never saw it before, that we cannot stand the world now without God. Once we might have jogged along and have done our common tasks, or have run through our ordinary pursuits, half conscious that there must be something more in our universe than we see with our dull eyes; but now we are shaken wide awake and we know with startling clearness that we cannot get on in any real fashion without a Divine Companion. The powerful recrudescence of superstition, the widespread craving for the supernatural, the intense interest in "revivals," and the eagerness of men everywhere to read what a popular novelist (H. G. Wells) has to tell of his discovery of "God," make unmistakably clear the fact that the heart of man

to-day is profoundly troubled, and that his hands are knocking anxiously at the door where he hopes help may be found.

But while the need is great and the search for Light is an urgent one, the real guides are still, as always, rare. It would surely seem that this time must eventually bring forth a major prophet who can authoritatively speak to the age out of eternity, but while we are waiting for him to come we may well turn to those of lesser stature who at least can start us on the right track and give us sure Light.

I am confident that the man whose life and message are given in this book is one of these "real guides" and that the Light which came through him was from God and still shows the way to God. He wrote in 1897: "We want to translate Christ into modern terms—to make Him real and to present Him in such a way that the appeal shall command the intellect and take a practical hold of life." He had come, as he once said in a personal letter, "to a real and living experience of the saving knowledge of God in Christ," and he felt henceforth that his main business on earth was that of interpreting the Christ-Life, the Heart of God, to his generation. Earnest seekers are bound to get help from one who can say as he did; "There comes a time when the higher life, of which I am always aware, and which I have tried to follow, becomes so merged in my thought of Christ and my devotion to Him that I can hardly distinguish the two in my mind. There comes a time when suddenly I am on my knees, my whole soul flooded with light and love, tears in my heart and eyes, an unspeakable peace enfolding me. The pierced hands have reached through to me at last and draw me gently forth to Him."

There is of course no adequate substitute for the living personality suffused with warmth and intimacy. Printed words are far less dynamic and convincing than is a radiant

embodied life, yet when haply a man succeeds in putting his personal conviction into his words and makes his sentences quick and vital with the "life-blood of a master spirit" his work can go on powerfully even after he is gone.

That is fortunately true of John Wilhelm Rowntree. There is a living pulse in this little book. The reader will, I am sure, feel it beat and he will reverently read on arrested and attracted by the testimony of one who has arrived. Here was a man, thoroughly human, genuine child of his time, beset with the baffling problems of a scientific and critical epoch, fearless in his questioning, forced to drink bitter cups of suffering, knowing in his own soul the meaning of the cross, who nevertheless overcame, achieved a real triumph of spirit, realised a companionship with God which transformed him through and through, and who, by divine assistance, became a spiritual leader among us. We cannot allow his inspiring influence to wane or vanish. We desire instead that even more powerfully than ever before he may now speak to the perplexed and distressed in this war-worn period, and that the vital message of his life and thought may bring comfort and assurance and spiritual victory to hundreds who have never seen the man whom we that knew him, loved and followed.

John Wilhelm Rowntree : The Man

THESE statements show that to their author the enrichment of the spirit of man was the greatest boon that could be conferred upon him. He sought to nourish his own soul in the best pastures, and by the purest springs he could find. His enjoyments grew by sharing, and so the necessity was laid upon him of ministering to others in thoughts divine, no less than in things temporal.

Young as he was when he died, keenly as he enjoyed life, greatly as he delighted in art and in beauty wherever he found them, his words were weighted with his own experience when he called to his comrades—" 'gather the rosebuds while ye may,' but gather them not for mere selfish enjoyment. Such roses turn to ashes, they have neither the bloom nor the sweet scent of the roses which grow in the garden of eternal love. There is no freshness of dew upon them." And so in a thoroughly manly fashion, he sought to turn the world's gardens into gardens of the Lord. He placed character before intellect, and the awakening of the soul first. He was keenly alive to the difficulties, to some minds more especially, in the acceptance of the historical Christ, but he had found for himself "a living bridge which links us to the past," and that "the personal knowledge of God as revealed in Christ, convicting us of selfishness, searching out our sin, destroying in its pure flame the dross of our lower nature, is an experience which banishes doubt, and demands no explanation." He longed exceedingly to see the simple, practical, true-hearted life of Christianity, as set forth in the New Testament, become a mighty power in the land; and for this he spent his life fearlessly and joyously.

John Wilhelm Rowntree was the eldest son of Joseph Rowntree of York, the head of the Cocoa firm there and the co-author of "The Temperance Problem and Social Reform." He came of a long line of Quaker ancestry on his father's side; through his mother, whose maiden name was Seebohm, he was descended from a Swedish officer who went over to Germany with Gustavus Adolphus during the Thirty Years' War, and afterwards settled in that country. He was born on the 4th September, 1868, in a home in which thought for others was a portion of his inheritance.

As a boy he was straight and honourable, but easily roused and passionate. At these times his language is said to have been highly impressive to the victims against whom it was directed. Occasionally he might hurl a chair at an offender, or roast the wax doll of a sister, or direct a hose pipe into a kitchen window, to avenge injuries received from an unsympathetic cook; but even these things were not done boisterously, but rather on "principles of honour" as the delightful servant to George Borrow in Spain used to explain his escapades. His thirst for knowledge set in early. His generalship and inventiveness showed itself in boyhood, in indoor games, but, most strikingly, in acting. It is said that one of his fancies in his teens was to have been an actor if only his deafness had not prohibited this. He was by no means the good boy, or peacemaker, of the family. He was perhaps most distinguished for "throwing himself tremendously into things" to which he gave himself. He had a fine disregard for the value of money. To all who knew him in later life these few touches may give vivid impressions of the long conflicts that must have been waged and won in the moulding of his character, as it grew up into the light of noon-day.

John was educated at the Friends' School at Bootham, York, and at Oliver's Mount School at Scarborough. He was not distinguished in his classes, caring more for men

than mathematics, and the deafness already alluded to shut him out from many of the games of the playground. To the onlooker he would have passed as a delicate child, observant and quick, not sympathetic, inclined to be quizzical, and for a schoolboy, careful of his appearance. (One of his masters writes of his schooldays: "J.W.R., as I remember him, was undoubtedly a boy of good natural ability, but being far from robust had never learned to use it effectively, He was not of a happy, contented, disposition. He had not developed that genial brightness which was so striking on all occasions later on." To this he adds, "No one knows what he has been to some of us.")

On leaving school he went at once into the Cocoa Works at York, and though not naturally methodical, he applied himself to business with extraordinary energy and diligence. Beginning in a subordinate position, he rapidly fitted himself for more responsible posts, and won and retained the esteem and friendship of the employees with whom he was associated. At this time he had not learned to measure his physical strength, and a certain degree of irritability from overstrain was often noticeable. In the later years of his life this irritability was so fully mastered that few even of his personal friends knew of the struggle before the victory. His impetuosity of mind and disposition became gradually disciplined, without any loss of executive force or administrative skill.

Perhaps his most noteworthy characteristic, from the time of leaving school to his death, was that of all round growth. He was not born a saint. As he consciously entered the life which is "life indeed," his whole nature seemed to reach up to the light, and to grow towards it. His humanity became wider and more tender as his spiritual faculties grew in power and depth. This upward wrestling was not without its cost, even to the last. He was often greatly depressed at the seeming ineffectiveness of his work. Now and then he felt as if he had lost all power of

helping others. He would then turn resolutely to some other line of service, or plunge into some hard reading. He would not allow slackness to prevail against him.

Whilst he was still struggling to obtain a secure foundation foothold of faith, religion became to John Wilhelm Rowntree the most real quest of his life. Humanity stood out before him as the highest of created things, and yet as sorely in need of compassion and of uplifting. He recognised the many ways in which sympathy could be shown, and aid be given to man, in body, soul, and spirit. He was keenly interested in art, in politics, in social reform, and in education, but religion to him held the key of all the rest; and as it grew to be a living reality in his own experience, he spared no time or thought or trouble to make it a reality to others. "Religion and life are one or neither is anything," became a cherished maxim with him. In his youthful ardour and longing for fearless sincerity, he was no doubt often crude in his utterances, often perturbing to the watchmen of his spiritual Zion versed in the watchwords of a former generation; but from the outset he sought for an underlying unity in the many diversities of thought and language, and those who knew him best saw that the great utterance of the Master, "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching," became more and more applicable to his case.

Adult School work, which had long been carried on in York, was an important factor in the growth of John's thought and character. It has been described by him as having

> "its basis in the promotion of a vivid sense of human fellowship, rooted in an all-embracing Divine Love. The small gatherings are, or should be, in the family spirit; their intensely human character, their simplicity, their freedom from conventional restraint, tend to keep them close to the difficult problems of life. These are too often left in the church porch, but in the Adult Schools they are, so to speak, laid on the table. . . .
>
> "The Adult Schools may be but the bridge to a different form of church fellowship, but at least they are a bridge."*

**History of Adult School Movement*, by J. W. Rowntree and H. B. Binns.

On leaving school he accompanied his father for some time to the parent Adult School in Lady Peckitt's Yard, but after a few years the determination to launch out into extension work grew upon him, and, almost single-handed, he established a school in the neighbouring village of Acomb, in June, 1893, when he was not twenty-five years old. A number of railway employees had come to live in the village, and the eager young teacher soon gathered a large company of intelligent men around him. Many of them were imbued with the questioning spirit of the age, and no commonplace presentations of truth would suffice to hold them. Piles of notebooks and MSS. remain to show the pains he took to give his hearers the best within his reach.

He thought twelve hours a week none too much time for the preparation of Sunday's lesson, and rose early, or sat up late to obtain them.

The most varied fields of knowledge were searched for their spoils, and the reapings were all made to subserve the deepest purposes of life. One short sample of these notes may be of interest :—

> "Read Addison's 'The spacious firmament on high,' quoted in Paines' 'Age of Reason.'
>
> "We have been dealing with the development of life from protoplasm and have seen how in one direction from chlorophyll and protoplasm we may have the development up to the daisy; in the other direction through varying forms up to man. There is a volume of God's nature library we have not opened, and which we will first peep into before proceeding with the social and moral development of man." [Then follow some stiff but charming geological notes on the formation of rocks].
>
> "Geological examination of ourselves will reveal the fact that our character is a stratified rock, each day laying a layer.
>
> " 'Little drops of water, little grains of sand,' etc.
>
> "Life is made up of hundreds of little microscopic decisions between right and wrong. Importance of little things."

In his lessons he cared yet more about drawing out than putting in. At the outset, he would ask any one who

could not follow what he was saying, to stop him at once. He welcomed interruptions gladly and would at once turn to a blackboard, or vary his illustration to make things clear. He watched the faces of the class, and when once he felt sure he had them with him, it was not always easy to stop; but he insisted on some time for questions at the end, and in this he was rarely disappointed. His deafness was, of course, a difficulty, but to ensure everyone having a chance, the Secretary, or someone who knew the men, would sit beside him and make sure that no question was passed by; now and then he would promise to answer a question next Sunday. "The only thing that ever did upset him" (one of the men said to the writer) "was to find a scholar in favour of war." "But he never offended the class. We saw how he liked honest opinions from everybody, and how he wanted us all to think. He would teach more in a few words than some men could in a day." "There never was anything of self about him."

On 28th July, 1892, John Wilhelm Rowntree was married to Constance M. Naish, of Bristol. His home life, first at York and then at Scalby, was one of exceeding happiness. It was lavishly shared with friends of all ranks and conditions. He and his young wife threw open their house to members of the School once a week, and formed a reading circle to assist them. The Acomb men had six or seven miles to walk from the railway shops to their homes, and then to John's house and back, yet there would be twenty to thirty of them in his drawing room on Thursday nights, ready to read Clodd's *Childhood of Religion*, or Kidd's *Social Evolution*, and to discuss them to the full, *but* not to the end,—for that was often left to the workshops.

Although he had to lay down his regular Adult School teaching later, he never lost his love for the Movement. In the last year of his life he gave, on generous terms, a house and garden in Scalby to be a Guest House for Adult Scholars. Its name "Friedensthal" (The Valley of Peace),

has been felt to be truly appropriate by many a tired working man or woman.

John's wife ever relieved him of household cares, but he did not lose sight of home duties in the far vistas that were constantly opening out before him. He confessed one Sunday to feeling tired at the close of a morning meeting for worship at Scarborough, but said he must return home and come in again at night. As his home was three miles away he was pressed to stay and rest. He replied decisively that he had promised "Violet" to take her out in her perambulator, and must do it. Violet, his youngest child, was then a person of about a year old. She was duly taken forth, and the tired man came back again to the evening meeting.

In person, John Wilhelm Rowntree was tall and erect. He had a frank and manly bearing; and in later years especially, there was always the readiness for a smile behind his straightforward earnestness of purpose. If his sense of humour softened it grew richer with his ripening years. His fun seemed to comẽ from two unfailing springs—his splendid hopefulness and his vivacious kindliness.

No portrait of him would be correct which did not succeed in conveying the definite impression that he was "an all round splendid and vigorous companion."

His power of helping many other people was to be found largely in his own ability to get the fullest enjoyment out of every circumstance of life. No one had a greater delight in holiday making than had John, and few people could tell such humorous stories. He tremendously enjoyed most forms of athletics, and in winter all indoor games of a social character,—not just out of sympathy for others, but because he liked such pleasures himself: and this was not in his immature stage only, but continued all through his life, although his interest in more important things grew stronger.

Allusion has been made to his early deafness. As the years went on a serious contraction of the power of sight, greatly restricting the field of vision, took place. In any dim light he could no longer see the way before him. The stumbling over a child on one occasion greatly pained him. One of the best physicians was consulted. He could hold out no hope of improvement, or even of the arrestment of the evil, and John went out from the consultation into the street under a doom of coming and irreparable blindness. He stood by some railings for a few moments to collect himself, and "suddenly felt the love of God wrap him about as though a visible presence enfolded him, and a joy filled him such as he had never known before."* Instead of retreating before this insidious foe and leaving human wrongs to right themselves, as men would readily have excused him for doing, he only sought the more continually to fit himself for efficient service for God and his fellows, during every day which might yet be given him. In many remarkable ways he turned "his necessity to glorious gain." Any one watching him felt that the gates that barred his vision only shut out the foreground, not the distance. The depicting of him as "with blind eyes luminous" is not inapt.

Though perforce an ambassador in bonds, he was yet no invalid. He had great enjoyment in life, and remained strong physically. His abounding labours put the inertia of most men without any such limitations to shame. He placed himself under an American specialist, and at the cost of severe regimen and treatment, the onward ravages of the complaint were stayed. His endeavours to reconcile his passion for work with due obedience to his medical advisers often caused subdued amusement to his friends.

In 1899, John was ordered to give up town life and daily attendance at business, and betake himself to a country home.

* This sentence is taken from the account of J.W.R. in the *American Friend*, by Rufus M. Jones.

He wrote at this time :—

". . . It is a discipline, doing nothing, to which I find it hard to yield. . . .

"Apparently we shall have to leave York soon, and as building is so slow, I am looking to take a country house somewhere, and not build for a few years. The change in one's life will be considerable, but I quite hope it will have its real compensations. The one thing I dread is to have my work in the Society of Friends restricted. I know it doesn't mean much in any case, but it is what I care most about."

He chose a house at Scalby, near Scarborough, quickly found pleasure in his new surroundings, gave himself eagerly to his garden, and began, as he said, to "intensify cabbages." Happily this application of chemistry reacted favourably on himself, and injured nobody. In reality the change of residence enabled him to give much of the energy hitherto devoted to business to objects nearer to his heart. He turned with redoubled desire to the "intensifying" of the Society of Friends.

Those who knew him will bear witness that John Wilhelm Rowntree's was one of the most catholic of minds. He believed that the religion of Christ brought out and nourished all that was best in man,—that this religion was intended by its Founder to be a lay, every-day religion, with His cross-bearing as its altar of sacrifice: with a ministry open to all who felt its call, a common fellowship of service, and great liberty in the exercise of spiritual gifts.

He saw that this vision had been realised to a remarkable extent in the early days of Quakerism, and he believed that the re-awakening of such a spiritual power in the land would far more than repay all the efforts that could be bestowed upon it.

He visited Friends' Meetings widely, in England and America, and from 1899 to 1902 he edited a fresh and stimulating monthly periodical, entitled *Present Day Papers*.

The testimony of the Society of Friends against all war, maintained throughout its history, was upheld by him with a passionate conviction, and the South African War whilst it lasted was a perpetual pain to him. An extract from one of his letters at that time indicates his thoughts upon it.

"The Society of Friends has been lamentably weak upon this wretched war. I have been appalled at the falling away among our younger people especially. I feel that one lesson of the war for us as a church is the need for the proper instruction of our *own* people. Each generation has to recapture for itself its spiritual heritage, and we need to seize upon the opportunity this war gives us for the restatement of our principles in terms which will appeal to a new generation. It is quite a mistake to assume that our young people will grow up 'right upon the war question,' unless we take the proper steps to inculcate our principles."

His high ideal of Quakerism is shown in the following extracts from letters :—

"At present our work is that of tillers of the soil. . . . I believe it is of the utmost importance while pressing, as Paul pressed it, the *practical side* of Christianity, to insist no less on the essential spirituality of the Christian life.

"I come back again to my old friend Edward Caird's statement at the close of his 'Evolution of Religion.' We need a religion which shall take count of the whole complex nature of man, shall satisfy his reason and his heart, and really meet the needs of the new time. The world waits for this.

"I do not believe we shall get very far with an appeal for simpler living and plainer, purer ways of life, unless we can associate these ideas with the Christ, and show them forth as essential to a true perception and grasp of Christianity as a living faith. We want to translate Christ into modern terms—to make Him real, and to present Him in such a way that the appeal shall command the intellect and take a practical hold of life.

"If as a Society we could present the Christ-ideal both as it affects the individual and the community—show Him as the heart of all that is true in art and literature—as the force which makes for social progress, the development of the highest and best in men and nations, focussing Him in all the various efforts and graspings after light, we would I think soon speak so that

men would listen. The work wanted now is much the same as that of George Fox—it is to dig deeper than the modern pessimist, and show him the living rock he has never yet struck, which is the ground of our optimism and faith. . . . It is appalling, when we contemplate it, how few have a real knowledge of God as something more than a superintendent engineer of the Universe, or of Christ as something more real than a factor in a theological proposition."

When he spoke in Friends' Meetings for Worship, his sermons were often thoughts springing from books just read, or passing events which had strongly arrested his attention. He would ponder on the relationship of these to the highest truths, and prepare his mind to speak with clearness upon them. The "blank sheet" frame of mind in worship stood for slothfulness to him, but on the other hand he anxiously sought to be sensitive to all intimations of Divine guidance, and to the actual needs of those present; speaking, or withholding, accordingly. It was striking at times to note how fine his perception was as to the state of a meeting, although he had heard but little of any previous utterances. Under the same desire to make the best of himself, he took great pains to learn how to use and to modulate his voice. His deafness made this a hard task, but he persevered, and succeeded to a surprising extent in mastering his difficulties. His ministry has been thus described by one who often heard it :—*

"John Wilhelm Rowntree's utterances were enriched by his study of the best that has been thought and said in the world, by his knowledge of German art, particularly that of Dürer and Holbein, and of some of the obscurer artists of the Renaissance, by his vivid recollections of his visit to the Holy Land, by his keen eye for form and colour in landscape, and by his intimate acquaintance with religious history. But all this scarcely goes to the root of the matter. He spoke effectively because he felt deeply. It was heart speaking to heart. His influence over young men and women was due in large measure to the fact that his experience, no less than his imagination, enabled him to put himself in their place. He had felt the difficulties, moral as well

* E. R. Cross, *British Friend*, April, 1905.

as intellectual, which prevent many thoughtful minds from accepting the Christian synthesis, and he never attempted to minimise them. His manly sincerity made it impossible for him to use the stock phrases of the religious vocabulary when they had come to have for him a meaning different from that in which they had been understood in the past. So he boldly proclaimed the fact of Christ in words having the same content as when used in everyday life. Of a singularly refined and reticent nature, and with no trace of egotism in his composition, he was yet constrained by the power of the divine love which had made its home with him, to present Christ to his hearers in the light of his own experience.

"He had found the solution of the problem of suffering in the revelation of a suffering God, and his conscious realisation of the love of Christ in his own heart came to him when he had entered into the fellowship of His sufferings. And so there was something about his ministry, both in public worship and personal intercourse, peculiarly comforting to all who mourned, or were in anxiety and distress."

The strong individuality of his faith, and the freedom with which he stated it, at times disturbed those whose spiritual attainments he regarded as far in advance of his own; but no one who knew him questioned the reality of his communion with God. In one of his last letters the confession, "having come myself to a real and living experience of the saving knowledge of God in Christ," is given as the reason for his whole-hearted desire to help others who might still be facing the difficulties he had passed through himself.

A further insight into his religious experience is given in a letter written a few months previously, referring to a volume lent to him by a friend.

". . . My real difficulty with the book is, that it seems to me to fail just at the point where failure is most disastrous, and it is not enough for me to regard Jesus as the most perfect of men.

"I do feel that the orthodox have been too timorous and reticent in dwelling upon the humanity of Christ. But whatever be the theological interpretation of the word 'divinity,' Jesus is for me the meeting-point of the human and divine—of man and God. His value to me is not merely that He tells us of the

divine in men, but that in Himself He reveals to us, through the Scriptures, the human side of the character of God.

"We make a huge assumption if we say that God cannot directly reveal Himself to man on His manward side; and that He did so in Jesus is what I mean by 'divinity.' As a supreme effort towards God, Jesus would indeed be great, but the dynamic of Jesus lies surely in His being an effort of God towards man.

"Mr A———'s book leaves the great gulf that yawned at the feet of Plato unbridged. His view, beautiful though it be, does not, from my standpoint, meet the deepest needs of a sinful world."

To this may be added the remark made on one occasion to a friend, "To me the cross of Christ contains the revelation that *sin hurts God*."

One other reminiscence of his ministry, personal and public, may be cited here :—*

"To him a man could open out his mind and lay bare his difficulties as to no other friend, and he who had gone through the gloomy sea of doubt was able to reach out a saving hand to those who felt themselves alone amid the waters. Around him, too, the most diverse natures could gather and come into touch with each other; 'he was the clearing-house to which we all brought our thoughts,' said one of his friends and fellow-workers to me, as we talked of what his going meant to us . . . to know him was to be his debtor.

"The last time on which I heard him speak in public was when he came last autumn to give the opening address at a series of religious discussions at Toynbee Hall. It was a new experiment, begun not without anxiety, and no easy task awaited him. But as he unfolded his thought before that audience of critical men, most of them hostile to the very name of Christianity, one felt how his words went home; a hush fell at times over opponents who would have been eager to scoff at a faith less deep and less sincere, and the honest doubter must have felt within himself the answering witness which the speaker was striving to arouse, as he set forth to us the unique Revelation of God in the Personality of Christ. He could not see all his audience, nor hear all the words that were used in argument, but he had a vision of that which our eyes discerned not, and his spirit listened to the silence of God."

* T. E. Harvey, in *Bootham*, May, 1905.

It is impossible to do more than touch lightly upon the many forms of active work for the Society of Friends carried out or planned for the future by John Wilhelm Rowntree. The Summer School Movement which has opened out to very many souls new possibilities of Christian fellowship and communion and a higher level of spiritual intelligence, was largely inspired and worked by him. Into the establishment of the permanent Friends' Settlement for religious and social study at Woodbrooke, near Birmingham (made possible by the generosity of the late George Cadbury), he threw his time, thought and affection without measure.

He was preparing the material for a history of Quakerism, a modern apologia for its place in Christendom, which he estimated as likely to prove a ten years' task, and for which he had collected more than two thousand volumes and pamphlets.

> "I shall hope," he wrote, "so to proportion my work day by day,—as to keep this study going, and at the same time remain sufficiently in touch with contemporary affairs, although undoubtedly this undertaking involves a certain withdrawal from work which would otherwise have been undertaken. I feel clear that if it can be accomplished, having regard to the far distant future, it is the work that needs doing, and may have a direct and practical effect upon the policy of the Society. Naturally, I feel my own limitations acutely but the sense of the need has rested on my mind for some years, and I feel that it is right to make the attempt."*

The Adult School Holiday Home at Scalby has been already referred to. As the scheme matured John was building a home for himself on land adjoining the Guest House. He needed and deserved a quiet home more than most men, but he used to say that the danger of a comfortable country home was the lessening of opportunity for serving others, and he planned it for others as much as for himself. The hall was to be large enough for lectures, and

*Ultimately seven volumes were published by Macmillan and Co.

on the second floor was a long and pleasant dormitory with fifteen cubicles, to take in an overflow of guests from "Friedensthal" on occasions of pressure. The erection of a pavilion was also contemplated, for the accommodation of week-end conferences, or local Summer Schools.

The working builder employed upon this house said to the writer that most men when you came to have dealings with them had two sides to their natures—a business side and a religious side—but with John Wilhelm Rowntree, keen though he was to get his work done, there was only one united whole.

Early in 1905, in the midst of all these hopes and efforts, John's sight was again a cause of anxiety, and a visit to his American specialist loomed suddenly before him. The treatment on the last occasion had been painful, but he never hesitated. For himself, he said he would prefer to stay at his work and take the risks; but his powers were a trust for others, and so the best advice obtainable must decide. He chose to go at once in order that he might be back before the Yearly Meeting at Leeds.

Shortly before sailing, he presided at the annual meeting of shareholders of the firm in which he was a director, making a masterly speech on the aims and policy of the business, and the importance of the social work carried on among the employees. His last Sunday in England was spent at York. He gave an address in connection with the laying of the foundation stone of a new Adult School at Burton Lane. A grand sunrise had suggested a passage in 1 *Thessalonians* v and he dwelt on the light as revealing love to man in the love of God. This was followed by a sermon in the meeting house on the victory of faith, leading from simple beginnings to "life on the heights," whilst in touch with humanity in the valley. This true sunlight on the soul was for life's morning, not only for its noontide or its evening. He closed very impressively by quoting as a morning hymn,

"Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies:
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee,
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."

His wife accompanied him to America, intending to return in time for the opening of the Guest House.

Pneumonia seized him on his way across the Atlantic. His friend and comrade, Rufus M. Jones, came on board the ship in New York harbour, and assisted in providing the most skilful help obtainable, but the traveller's brave stewardship of life ended three days after the landing. All that was mortal of him was laid to rest by the kindest of Friends in the burial ground at Haverford, not far from Penn's city of Brotherly Love. But his life lives on.

J.R. & S.E.R.

Claim Your Inheritance

I

MAY WE BELIEVE IN GOD?

Scripture portion—Psalm vii *or* John xv, 1–11

THOSE who have been fortunate enough to escape from the town into the country during these beautiful days of the waning year, have found nature in a kindly mood. Autumn, spirit though she be of gentle melancholy, has kept her court in regal fashion, decorating the woods with glowing colour, touching the leaves with "fiery finger tips" to scarlet and gold, and diffusing the slant rays of the setting sun through a delicate veil of mist upon the moorland heights, till they seemed as the glory of a haloed saint. Often it has been possible in the loneliness of the hills, with the fragrance of the damp woods in our nostrils, and the clinging silence of nature, to feel with Wordsworth:—

> " that serene and blesséd mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on—
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things,"

and with the poet learn to evade

> . . . "the fretful stir
> Unprofitable, and the fever of the world."

As the light fades in the evening sky, outward and inner vision are enticed from distance to distance of faint colour, up from "the russet lawns and fallows grey" into the illimitable void of space. Now twilight has in her "sober livery all things clad." The ecstasy of colour is past. Gathering gloom blots out the familiar details, the church tower seen through the trees, the farm nestling under the distant hill, the glint of water in the stream, the far roadway, all the marks of human fellowship, the home surroundings of the earthly life, fade in the blackness of night, and the sky is stretched above us, a great dome pierced with a thousand twinkling points of light. Man and all his business of courts and parliaments, markets and finance, his pains and pleasures, shrinks into infinitely little compass. The mind ranges free along pathless ways among the stars.

And yet in this joy of colour, this mood so exalted, so aloof, this severance of human ties, is it all peace?

There is so much beauty in a starlit sky; the moon, subject of endless verse,

> "Oft, as if her head she bowed,
> Stooping through a fleecy cloud,"

the planets with their steady beam, the glittering dust of the Milky Way—that we might well forget everything save the pageant spread before us, did not other thoughts intrude. The emptiness of intervening space, the dizzy gulf that separates star from star, the unthinkable, interminable, appalling vastness of a universe without a limit. The terror of the giant forces let loose in the flaming gases of those wheeling suns, their fierce unswerving onrush, second after second, year after year, century after century, millennium after millennium; the mystery of the dead worlds, heaven's spent fireworks, hung barren and frozen to swing monotonously through their inexorable circles.

As the solemn realities of eternity, the impotence of

human power, the poverty of human knowledge, are unfolded to our searching quest, the peace of the starlit sky is broken. We hear the clang and roar of the machinery of the universe; a wind from desert places, cold and inhospitable, shrivels the soul. We feel suddenly the unutterable loneliness which, in hours of self-realisation, gathers round the faltering faith of man. What is he that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that Thou visitest him?

Is it true that Thou crownest him with glory and honour? Thou who hast set Thy glory upon the heavens, the work of Thy fingers?

And is there behind this pageant, in the earthquake, wind and fire, is there, can there be one who cares, one to whom I can pray, one I may call my Father?

That is the question we have before us to-day, the question involved in the title "May we believe in God?" —the question which the unflinching self-examination of the soul, earnestly intent upon the realities of worship, must put and answer.

Worship is a labour of the spirit, a concentration of mind and heart upon the supreme end, the establishing of a living contact between the individual soul and the spiritual force or forces of the Universe. Worship must be something more than the conventional homage paid to an idol personifying our national pride, self-righteousness and self-esteem; an idol which is made to throw its protection over law and order under the mask of religion, and to recognise as inviolable under that name all rights of property and dignities of rank and place, while slow to recognise social justice or to cherish humility, mercy and peace.

It is only in the inwardness of true spiritual worship that the soul grows aware of its deepest need, becomes impatient of self-deception and of the world's poor baubles, and seeks with passionate longing to know the real basis and meaning of life.

Here in the crowded congregation, as alone in the temple of nature, man is driven to face the naked facts of experience, and to ask the question already stated, "Is there a God whom I may worship, and if there be, how may I find him?"

"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" So enquired Zophar the Naamathite of Job, and such is the interrogation of the modern mind, baffled and confused in the conflict of life, and by the ever-growing problems of existence.

How shall we set about to answer? Few of us probably are trained in philosophical thinking, the technical language of abstract thought is difficult to us, for the average Englishman is practical rather than speculative. A learned logical argument is probably beyond our reach, certainly beyond mine, and in any case could not possibly be conducted to a satisfactory issue in one hour. Must we then abandon the search? I think not. There is fortunately a path of approach wherein the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err. The way to God lies not solely nor even primarily through intellectual processes of reasoning, but through the heart. There are, in short, two modes of attack, the intellectual and the spiritual. And while I do not say that intellectual processes have no place or validity, I believe the second alternative is at once the most hopeful and helpful for this or for any company of men.

I believe this to be inevitable, because we are compelled by the conditions of our nature to think of God in the terms of human relationship. We can talk as we like of the "absolute," and the "infinite." These terms are convenient and stand for certain philosophical ideas. But at best they are terms used to express supposed realities which the human mind cannot possibly grasp or comprehend. They are as counters in the game of logic, the letter X in our algebraic equation, they cannot be palpitating realities to us as men. It is a great fallacy to suppose that you can

argue a man into the knowledge of God; supply him, that is, with intellectual proofs of His existence and character, altogether apart from the question of spiritual state or receptivity. That there are mental difficulties, difficulties of the reason, which check or bar spiritual progress is, of course, sadly true. They have to be removed if peace is to be won, and intellectual arguments may and do have a persuasive or suggestive influence. Only I do not see that by themselves they can be exhaustive or complete.

Take the causality argument. By itself it leads nowhere. It proceeds in this fashion. Here is some object, let us say Burns' "wee, modest crimson-tippit flower." It must have had a cause. You press the enquiry back and back, effect, cause, effect, cause, effect, cause—but where do you stop? At God! Then who caused God? No! There is no finality—no helpful issue here. It contains a truth, but not the final truth.

Take the argument from design. Now I am quoting the philosopher:—

"The argument from design to a *pĕrsonal* God does not convince anyone who is not *already* convinced."

"The most that can be *proved* from design," he adds, "is the fact that a man is a being who finds designs and ends and purpose everywhere in his world."

In other words, although the argument from design contains a great and suggestive truth, by itself it is not adequate for our purpose. Let us attempt a brief excursion into this field of argument and see how much we can gather from it. You know the famous watch theory? An intelligent savage picks up a watch upon the beach. It is evident to him that it is the work of an inventive and constructive mind, a higher intelligence (whom he will probably worship as a god), and this view is strengthened by the discovery that the little wheels one within the other co-operate to measure time, have in short a definite end which they serve. The facts of nature, we say, are like this

watch and lead us to make the inference of a controlling mind. But here science interposes difficulties. She develops the theory of the struggle for the survival of the fittest. There is constant adaptation to changing conditions and necessities.

The ends served by nature, says science, are not ultimate, visible, definite and fixed, like the ends served by the watch. Moreover they are those of the creatures that seek them, not those of God. Darwin saw conditions develop necessities, necessities develop ends, and ends develop the power to seek them, and he could not see that in this there was any need of creative invention or of creative purpose. A man falls lame through an accident, and cuts a walking stick with his knife to help himself along, but the stick is the design of the man, not of God. Such difficulties, though often pressed and sometimes confusing, do not in any reality touch the central truth. The power and freedom of adaptation remains, and is no argument against an ultimate purpose, an original initiative, a working and controlling mind. As a matter of fact, man *does* find *coherence* in the universe. He is able to classify the forces and facts, to rely upon their certain action and character under recognised conditions and in recognised modes.

Whether the universe has existed always or whether it has been created in six days, whether it is real or a subjective illusion, we do not escape the necessity for a cause, and since the universe, whether it be an illusion or not, is intelligible to the individual and to the corporate human consciousness, since the structure and action of our minds correspond to the structure and method of things around us, it is neither absurd nor illogical for us to argue from the facts to a mind outside our own.

But where does all this lead to? Such argument may be of service in meeting the stupid dogmatism of those who assert, in the fulness of their omniscience, that there is no first cause, no creative mind, no God. It is certainly useful

in assisting to clear away the mental barriers which obstruct the earnest soul in his search after the ultimate cause, but it fails hopelessly to realise for the seeker that which he most longs to know, the character and purpose of an ultimate cause in its personal relation to himself. In the words of a friend of mine, "the God and Father of Jesus Christ is the God whom we, in our modest quest, want to know, and not another."

That I believe, whether we are all willing to confess it or not, is the truth. It is God,as we see Him in Christ, who satisfies the longings of the human heart,—God the loving Father, whose passionate tender care for the least and most insignificant makes the burden of life supportable—brings faith and hope to man.

Let us then abandon the intellectual argument, that is to say the argument *in vacuo*, and endeavour to follow out what we may call the spiritual line of approach, keeping close to the facts of experience and of history as we do so. A certain view of God has come to us through Jesus of Nazareth. Let us take this view as our assumption or hypothesis, and test it. We shall only be adopting the methods of science if we do so. Given a fact, the scientist frames his interpreting hypothesis, and sets to work to subject it to the test of an experiment. He makes indeed an experimental venture of faith. That is a sound method. Neither in science nor religion can we arrive at truth unless we experiment. In both, the construction of unverified theories is a barren task. The man who asserts that he will believe only what he understands, forgetting the wholesome teaching of the old adage, "Nothing venture, nothing win," is in great danger of turning into an intellectual fossil.

We must at the outset arm ourselves with a definition. The word "God" is used in so many different senses that we must be particular in this. We are not concerned for instance with the national God, who fights the battles of England or Germany or Russia, as if he were the chieftain

of a tribe; we are concerned with the God of Jesus, who is yet very imperfectly known and understood in Christian Europe.

And the matter is important because our idea of God means really our idea of life. You cannot separate them. The two are inevitably and organically related. You hate or despise the foreigner. You make a proud boast of your national strength. You straddle across the seas and dare others to compete with you, and at once the Universal Father shrinks to the God of one nation, or the conception becomes so pagan that He is spoken of as the God of Battles, and all the grace of Christian humility, and all the moral grandeur of Christian meekness, are swallowed up in the vapourings of an ignoble pride.

Belief in God, and the character and terms of our belief, are of practical individual, nay, of international importance. We set out, therefore, with the Christian definition of God: a definition drawn from the material of the Gospels; I give it you as stated by Professor Charke in his "Outlines of Christian Theology."

"God is the Personal Spirit, perfectly good, who in holy love, creates, sustains and orders all."

Can we test that?

To begin with, if God is thus described, perfectly good, the Creator of all, how comes it that so many doubt His existence? Would not His reality be self-evident, all pervading, all controlling? Yes, it would if man's spiritual consciousness were developed to the necessary degree of spiritual sensitiveness. But man sees very dimly. Mr Blatchford, for example, is cocksure that there is no God, and demolishes Him in two hundred pages of journalese. With Job, we can only answer him, "No doubt ye are the people and wisdom shall die with you," though we shall be inclined to extend the quotation and add in the words of that patriarch, "But I have understanding as well as you!" The fact is that the conception of a good God is too

far-reaching for our immediate comprehension. To quote Professor Clarke:—"The reality of such a being can be firmly established only by concurrent reasons coming from various realms of existence and approved by various powers of the human spirit." Proof by intellectual argument is one thing—the growing knowledge of active experience is another.

Introduce a primitive savage to Lord Kelvin. How long would it be before they conversed upon equal terms? To the savage, Lord Kelvin would simply be a physical animal of the same species, inferior probably in brawn and muscle to himself. His powers of intellect would be simply non-existent so far as the savage was concerned. Perhaps Lord Kelvin might perform a chemical experiment before him, give him, so to speak, a sign from heaven with an explosion and a flash, something like Mount Pelée on a small scale, and then the savage would probably beat the ground with his forehead and grovel, not because he understood, but in fear and dread of that which he did *not* understand. Assuming for the moment that the savage was capable of such tuition in the space of a lifetime, he would need to be taught step by step what Lord Kelvin knew, to have Lord Kelvin interpreted for him, so to speak, and then he would see, not merely a physical being like himself, but a commanding intellect. Nay, more than that, he would find that in understanding Lord Kelvin he himself had ceased to be the mere cunning brute of the wilderness, and the whole of life would have a different aspect. Instead of the fish in the river and the nuts on the trees and the sheltering cave at night, his mental horizon would embrace civilisation. Literature, art, science, culture, the subtle relationship of intellectual and refined society, all these would have been swept in upon his consciousness. It was all there before, but the savage did not know. He could not see. He had to learn.

So it is with man and God. Man needs to learn. God

needs to be interpreted. To see Him and know Him we must grow into His image.

Or let me put it in another way. In his book, "Social Law in the Spiritual World," Professor Rufus Jones says:—

> "The revelation of God is like the revelation of music. Music is revealed, can be revealed, only through a musician. It comes to be reality, to be influencing power, a subduing and controlling force, only as an appreciative mind seizes and expresses the meaning and value of harmony. To the musician himself the world of harmony which he blindly felt at first as he laboriously toiled to master his instrument has now really become a reality not a whit less real than are the scenery and circumstance of his life of sense."

And having quoted this passage, I find Professor Jones so much in accordance with what I desire to say, that I shall quote him again:

> "If," he says, "our search for God is to have a happy issue we must *first* resist the tendency to narrow knowledge. We must rather insist on raising it to the highest terms. We must include under the *knowledge process* our entire capacity for dealing with reality. Secondly, we must look for God where He *could be* found—not in the wide stellar spaces, not 'in eagle's wing or insect's eye,' not at the end of a logical syllogism. If He is to be found at all we must look for Him in the spiritual realm. We must go at once where spirit manifests itself. All attempts to find God apart from and dissevered from personal life have failed, and of course always will fail. He is surely not less personal than we are; He will at least be as genuinely spiritual as we mortals are!"

Here is a clear lead as to the methods we are to adopt in testing our definition.

The scientific man, working with laborious patience in his proper sphere, has an aversion for what he calls "subjectivity." The inward spiritual facts of life are no facts to him. You cannot put them in a crucible or examine them under a lens. Direct the telescope to Saturn and you see his rings, direct the microscope upon a leaf and you see its cells. But the astronomer turning from his telescope

exclaims, "I have swept the heavens and find no God!" What shall we think of the man who after adjusting and focussing his microscope, rises with the exclamation, "I have examined the brain and find no trace of love"?

We should be reminded I think of Lord Kelvin and the savage. What is it we value most in life? Is it things as they are in the outward? Is it the bare objects of sense? that which we can weigh, measure, dissect? In the landscape is it not its indefinable aspect of beauty? in the human being is it not the subtle charm of character, the winsomeness of unselfish love, the radiant joy of a pure heart? If we think of it, outward facts are of moment to us only as the vehicles of an inward reality, and without that inward reality, to adopt Professor Jones' vigorous language, "a man would be as interesting as a sand dune, as unspiritual as an extinct volcano on the moon."

The answer to the scientist is this:—Judging by the sure test of cumulative experience, the facts of the spiritual life are as real and of deeper importance than the facts of the physical world. But these facts are personal.

Very well then, I shall be frankly "anthropomorphic," and that terrible anathema which the agnostic pronounces upon the orthodox with all the unction of an "abracadabra" shall for once be disregarded.

Our definition says, "God is *the* Personal Spirit," and as I study the history of Christian experience—the test of the definition—I find it *is* this personal aspect of God which has uplifted and sustained men in the stress of suffering and persecution, and given them peace and joy in the bitterness of bereavement or in the hour of death. Science dwells on the vastness of God—the endless reaches of space, the majesty of law. This is an aspect of the supreme power, but not that aspect towards which we turn as children seeking help. We cannot follow Him through space. We are lost in the desolate void. No doubt to the pantheist who asserts the abstract essence as over against the

personality, this thought appeals, but whatever be the truth of Pantheism—and it doubtless expresses a truth—we are bound to say, if we accept the Christian revelation, that God may be more than we can mean by personal, but he is not less. The thought of God's vastness crushes, whereas we need a conception of Him which shall give us confidence and courage. The evidence of experience is final, that help comes through another channel, by the way of a personal interpretation.

"God is the Personal Spirit, perfectly good, who in holy love creates, sustains and orders all." On whose witness do we say that? On the witness of Jesus Christ.

If we resist the tendency to narrow knowledge and insist on raising it to the highest terms, what are the highest terms in the range of human experience?

Again it is the witness of Jesus Christ. Now let us keep close to experience; what, as an historical fact, *is* that witness? First of all, if we are to interpret the gospels and the history of the church we are bound to say again that it is the witness of personality. The Gospel is the story of an incarnation, the Gospel is the assertion that in Jesus "God and man come together in a single individual life" —in short the Gospel *is* Jesus Christ.

I am not making a theological assertion of my own. I am not even confining myself to the evidence of the New Testament. I am trying to discover the spiritual and social dynamic of twenty centuries—and I find it not only in the teaching and death, in the life and the message, but in the *person* of Jesus.

History points to Him as the supreme interpreter of the divine music—of that " deep power of harmony" in which "we see into the life of things"—the interpreter of God.

Let me put it as it has come to me and to many more. As our human minds are constituted there can in the nature of the case be no revelation of God except in human terms, terms we can understand with human faculties. A God

who is unrelated to man by human ties is a God who must remain for ever unknowable and remote. Very well then. Read in the history of the human race the story of man groping after God. Here and there he catches a gleam of the heavenly radiance, hears the "rustling of garments of the Lord." In Egypt, India, China, Persia, Greece, men have gathered something of the eternal truth. We find it scattered in their literature, their old books tell us what they saw. But the vision was imperfect. Truth flickered, flaming high in Socrates and Plato, sinking low in the Egyptian Priest. Hope and knowledge were uncertain. Pessimism lurked at the heart of the Hindu philosophy, and Plato longed for a sure and certain raft—some Divine word upon which men might make perchance a safe harbour from life's stormy sea.

Into the twilight of the world steps the pure child of God. He was the dawn. With Him came daylight. The sun shone above the hills. What had been dim was clear. "I and the Father are one." The great gulf between man and God is bridged. The heavens like brass are pierced. God has spoken in human language. He has made Himself known on His human side. He has interpreted His own character and will in a life lived under human conditions, and has brought Himself within our human comprehension. In Nature there is mystery. The mystery of unequal suffering, of pain, sin, and the terror of death, of the cruel struggle for survival, the preying of the strong upon the weak, of "nature red in tooth and claw." But through the dark veil which hid God from man comes a crowned figure with this speech upon His lips: "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." To the slave of doubt and fear He gives His hand. Life has had no meaning, no adequate ideal or purpose. "Take up thy cross and follow me." Certain facts of nature have seemed to you to fight strongly against a belief in the love of God. "Come unto me and I will give you rest."

What is there inherently impossible in this movement of God towards man? Apart altogether from historical evidence, the gathering witness of experience, the continued and growing vitality of the Christian view of life, which have somehow or other to be accounted for, why may we not freely accept the claim of Christ to be the revealer of the Father and render Him gladly the homage of intellect and heart?

We are assuming the truth of the Christian view of God, God a loving, holy, personal spirit. But what does that involve? We forget sometimes that love is the most intense and active principle in the whole range of spiritual experience. The most loving personality we know is always the strongest in self-sacrifice, the richest in sympathy, the tenderest in charity, the one who enters most deeply into the lives of others. He is never self-centred, he is always reaching out, seeking to serve. This is our human experience. If we say God is love, can His love be less or other than ours? People sometimes talk loosely of their belief in love as an abstraction, as if an indefinable atmosphere of passive, impersonal good nature could pervade all things. But love cannot be either passive or impersonal. Its nature demands that it be both active and personal. Deprived of these attributes love ceases to exist. Love must have volition, initiative, direction, and love must have an object outside itself. If God is love He must seek man, He must wish to help him. He must be the sum of all the attributes which are swallowed up in the meaning of love. If the structure and action of our minds correspond to the structure and method of things around us, if we find the universe, whether illusion or reality, coherent and intelligible, are we to draw an arbitrary line and say that there cannot be a personality outside our own with which we are able to correspond? Upon what principles of logic, what evidence of experience, do we defend such a view? What for example will you make of the existence from a remote past of the instinct of prayer?

Experience is against us. Men have accepted the saying, "I and the Father are one," not on the mere authority of the Gospels, but because it has borne the test of time and satisfied their craving. Jesus, pure, holy and selfless, in the agony of Gethsemane, and on the cross, is the accepted witness to the suffering love of a personal Father, one who cares, who grieves over sin, and is wounded in His heart by every transgression. Men have felt the strong drawing of that passionate yearning which broke forth in the cry, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," and they have yielded their will to the higher and stronger will of one whom they have come to recognise as a saviour, finding in this surrender a peace that nothing could destroy. Remember this is not speculative theology, but a statement of experience, an experience, moreover, illustrated in the victory of countless souls over sin and death. We are but pseudo-scientific if we contemptuously brush aside such evidence as of no account in a serious analysis of the forces and realities of life.

I repeat that if the witness of Jesus means anything, it means that God is not unrelated and impersonal, but that He is in spiritual contact with men, intelligible like the universe to human consciousness, that His love is not intangible but real, and corresponds to human love; that His character is like our character but pure and perfect, that he knows and understands us and that we can know and understand Him.

" By all that He requires of me," says Whittier, "I know what God Himself must be," and by the obligations of human love, by the witness of Jesus Christ, we may know and see the character of God upon His human side. In Jesus we hear the beating of the Father's heart, and touch the hidden spring of the Divine Passion.

This at least is the strongest and most hopeful faith in the world to-day. Whatever our own may be, we must recognise its wonderful attraction—its drawing power. Close

the Gospels for ever, erase the name of Jesus from the literature and the memory of men, and a dark shadow falls upon the world. A view of God full of solace and comfort disappears, and we are left to brood helpless once more over the mysteries of space and time. The divine music ceases, and we hear again the roar and clang of the machinery of the universe.

Is there not in this evidence, so imperfectly marshalled, an indication of the true line of advance? We may believe in God but it must be an affair of the heart. We must be willing to make the venture of faith, to learn the virtue of self-sacrifice, to take with Christ the form of a servant, and with Him to live within self-imposed limits for the sake of doing good. Step by step as we approach Christ experimentally, see with His eyes of tender pity, feel with His heart the burden of the world, we shall be learning to know the Father.

For man such faith is an end worth striving after, for, in the language of Erskine, it will rescue him from the uncertainties of time, by giving him a secure standing place in the eternal purpose of God.

"O Lord and Master of us all!
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
We test our lives by Thine.

Thou judgest us; Thy purity
Doth all our lusts condemn;
The love that draws us nearer Thee
Is hot with wrath to them.

* * * *

To Thee our full humanity,
Its joys and pains, belong;
The wrong of man to man on Thee
Inflicts a deeper wrong.

* * * *

We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In different phrase we pray;
But dim or clear, we own in Thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way!

The homage that we render Thee
Is still our Father's own;
Nor jealous claim nor rivalry
Divides the Cross and Throne.

To do Thy will is more than praise,
As words are less than deeds,
And simple trust can find Thy ways
We miss with chart of creeds.

No pride of self Thy service hath,
No place for me and mine;
Our human strength is weakness, death
Our life, apart from Thine.

Apart from Thee all gain is loss,
All labour vainly done;
The solemn shadow of Thy Cross
Is better than the sun.

Alone, O love ineffable!
Thy saving name is given;
To turn aside from Thee is hell,
To walk with Thee is heaven!"*

*Whittier, "Our Master."

II

WHAT HAS JESUS TO SAY TO THE INDIVIDUAL?

Scripture portion—2 Cor. v, 14–21

In the preceding lecture we discussed the question "May we believe in God?" In seeking an answer we took three points of view:—

1. The Intellectual
2. The Scientific
3. The Personal

We rejected the first, not because we despise the intellect, or belittle its place in religious life. That would be a crowning folly in these days of sloppy and superficial thought, when men mistake spiced rhetoric for spiritual fervours, and the garnished paganism of the doctrine of force for Christian Gospel. Deep, serious thinking is a most desirable discipline for this hasty, pleasure-loving age, and as a condition of true progress is alike indispensable whether we are engaged in the spiritual or the social aspects of the religious problem.

We rejected what we have labelled the intellectual method of finding God because by itself the intellectual method, that is the method of proceeding by the processes of pure reason and logical sequence, is proved futile or inadequate in experience. A young American who had been sent to a theological college wrote after six weeks' residence to his father that he guessed he had learnt all there was to know about God—what was he to do next? He is an effective caricature of a type which finds its philosophy of

life cheap and ready-made, of men who live not deeply but pleasantly, so the wind but favour their sails, optimists in blinkers, whose motto is evasion, who shirk life's sterner facts, who never practise their spiritual sinews in the wrestling of faith, but draw down the blinds of a comfortable domesticity against the solemn realities of Eternal Truth.

For them doubtless anything is good enough, but the serious seeker cannot find God at the end of a chain of argument, because, on the one hand, God is something more than a philosophical product, the "Ergo" of the logician, and on the other, because the wounds of the broken-hearted, stricken with life's deepest sorrow, in the desolation of bereavement or heavy under the burden of sin, can find no comfort in the crackle of scholastic parchment.

We rejected what we have labelled the scientific method of finding God, not because we have any fear of science, not because we deprecate its vigorous search after scientific truth, its methods or its conclusions, when confined to their proper sphere. That would be to make the cardinal error of separating God from His world and of refusing to find Him in Nature. If we believe that the revelation of God is coherent and continuous, we must believe that there are no gaps without God in the Universe. We must welcome every new fact, whether from the hands of Darwin or Huxley, and whether or not it disturbs the comfort of those accustomed ideas of the cosmogony which too often we confound with faith.

But the "Nature" of Science is not and never can be the God of the human heart. Nor can science alone reveal Him to us. Nature as understood by science, and treated as the only revelation to the exclusion of the Christian conception of the Eternal Fatherhood, becomes, as Sabatier tells us in his "Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion," a "formidable screen erected between ourselves and God, destroying hope and quenching prayer."

Its enigmas are so terrible, its evidence of law so crushing, its fatalism so complete.

In this connection, I quoted Professor Clarke:—"The reality of such a being," that is of a God to whom we can reach out in the need of our souls just as children reach out their little hands to their mother in the dark, "can be formally established only by concurrent reasons coming from various realms of existence and approved by various powers of the human spirit."

We do not indeed absolutely reject the intellectual and scientific when we turn to what I call the personal method of finding God; we reject them only as in themselves insufficient, and adopt the personal method, the method of the heart, because experience teaches that this is the method by which alone the others become valid.

I have described this method as *personal* because that description defines what are, in the nature of the case, the conditions of any real knowledge of Divine Truth. We are personal, finite beings. Our powers of apprehension are personal and finite. If God cannot interpret Himself in human language, the language of the personal and the finite, then He must remain forever unrevealed and unknowable to man. He may be there, but the point of contact is missing. There may, for example, be civilisation in Europe, but the savages in some undiscovered forest of South America, who live for the chase and whose blow-pipes are the only symbol of their superiority over the brutes, can know nothing of it. The means of knowledge, the points of contact are missing. They would need a visitor from Europe to teach them what the higher life of our civilisation might mean, and would only begin to understand him when he stooped to their intelligence and spoke in their tongue. Even as music demands an interpreter before it can flood the soul with its divine harmony, so God demands an interpreter before the heart can recognise that which it forever seeks and craves to know and feel.

If the contemporary witness of men and women and the cumulative experience of twenty centuries are to count for

evidence, it must be taken as an attested fact that we find the supreme personal contact with the invisible God in Jesus Christ. What is the significance of that contact? In other words, if this be true, and its truth, remember, must be tested by experience rather than by argument, "*What has Jesus to say to the Individual?*" If in Him the veil is pierced, the terror of death taken away, the meaning and purpose of life revealed, if in Him we may find the musician who plays on our heart-strings the melodies of God, the great interpreter, what is the burden of that music? What *is* the interpretation?

Now in answering this question we must be careful to avoid as far as we can the use of theological terms. They are not satisfying. There has been far too much scholasticism in our treatment of the person and work of Christ. The cry "Back to Christ," though it means many things, means also, if not primarily, this—that men have grown weary of seeking spiritual food in doctrinal formulæ. They have lost the human touch of Jesus. Theology has proceeded so often apart from the actual experience of the soul, it has so often confounded Roman jurisprudence with spiritual law, and treated the subtle fabric of spiritual belief as if it were capable of mathematical measurement, that it has lost sight of the terrible pressure of our need for human relationship with God.

Consider for a moment the significant cult of the Virgin. We may interest ourselves if we like with the mythological origins, and trace the worship of Mary to the adoration of the female principle in creation which under its various forms is to be found all over the world. But surely the practical meaning of this phenomenon is this—that the tender warmth and human attractiveness of the personality and teaching of Jesus have been destroyed or hidden by the cold, harsh and repellent theological interpretation which has been forced upon them. The human craving for Divine Love, barred from Jesus, has sought refuge in the

mother heart of the Virgin, has carried over to her that conception of God which Jesus really gave. Nay, I will go further and state my belief that the fact of what we call "Unitarianism" may be attributed very largely to the same cause. Tender spirits more truly baptised than many who acknowledge the title of Christian in its accepted sense have been revolted by the "Jesus" of orthodoxy, and have been driven to find direct in God that thought of the Eternal Fatherhood to which Jesus in His life of perfect filial obedience first gave vitality and power.

To my mind both these positions have their peculiar dangers. The worship of the Virgin, resting as it does on no adequate historical basis, and in itself an unconscious compromise with truth, is liable to superstition, and the Unitarian view, so essentially Christian in spirit and often so beautiful in its expression, runs the terrible risk of becoming de-humanised in the absence of personal focus. The conscious acknowledgment of Jesus as a movement of God towards man, as the bearer of a saving revelation of Truth, seems to me of more than mere intellectual importance, for experience as a whole does, I think, sufficiently witness that the vision of the Fatherhood, when it comes to us through the medium of the suffering Christ, is imbued with a wonderful fulness of spiritual power, and is able to touch the springs of the heart's devotion as no other expression of Truth has ever done in the long story of the human race.

In saying this Christians do not pass moral judgment upon those who differ from them. They have no right to do so. Too often in the practical witness of everyday life we have miserably limited and distorted the teaching and the witness of the Lord whom we would serve. During the last great struggle in South Africa few have been more faithful in their protest against the degrading passions of the war-spirit than the Unitarian, and when we remember some of the sentiments so loudly expressed by professing

Christians, who, forgetting the sad figure in the Garden of Gethsemane, hastened to espouse a Hebrew God of Battles in their eagerness to justify their country, we may well be dumb.

There is indeed no sign of grace, despite the dark symptoms of prevailing materialism, more full of hope than the gathering determination to get behind the symbols of speech and the doctrines of the creeds, to the spiritual reality underlying them all. For long years it has seemed as if we were witnessing the steady attrition of faith subjected to the continual and effective bombardment of an informed and powerful criticism. But at last there are signs of change, signs of positive results arising out of what seemed a purely negative process. It is true that in the last hundred years more books have been written about Jesus than in any other century of the Christian era. The interest deepens. Whether we approach from the stand-point of the avowed agnostic or of the devout believer, we must feel as though the world were trembling on the brink of a great spiritual discovery, as if in these modern days we were about to receive a clearer vision of God, a great fresh unfolding of His Will and of His Divine Sympathy, which will touch the heart of modern culture even as the fervid gospel of Wesley and Whitefield reached the buried life of the down-trodden and outcast in eighteenth century England. There is hope that the fruit of what we call "Modern Thought", which, by the way, is strangely old, may be a richer life, a deeper unity, a melting of the hard lines of division between sect and sect, and that in the dissolution of stereotyped creeds we may find true brotherhood in a fuller interpretation of God's Fatherhood, and unite in a living fellowship under the sway of the Christ's compelling power. Creeds are milestones, Doctrines are interpretations; Truth, as George Fox was continually asserting, is a seed with the power of growth, not a fixed crystal, be its facets never so beautiful.

We shall be right, then, if we keep as close as we can to experience as our guide, and answer the question "What has Jesus to say to the Individual?" in the simple, untaught speech of unprofessional laymen.

If a thoughtful person were reading the Gospels for the first time and were asked what he judged to be the dominant note of the message of Jesus, I think the answer would certainly be "The Fatherhood of God."

What do I mean by that? The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man are unfortunately stock platform phrases and find but a weak illustration in the practical ways of shrewd, self-seeking business life—the life of the majority.

I will put it this way:—Here is the world with its tangible facts. I study it and find law everywhere, in the minutest cranny of the remotest mountains, in the star-dust on the deep ocean floor, in the common daisy and the rarest hot-house bloom, in the smallest insect and in the elephant—it is all one. I cannot escape from it. I consider myself. I am one of millions, coming and going. I too am in the grip of law, no account is apparently taken of my personal desires except in so far as they subserve this common law. I know absolutely nothing of a previous existence, absolutely nothing at first hand of a future existence. I see just what I do see and no more. I am like a cyclist on a dark night: the lamp of my reason and experience lights up just a very little of my road, but with this difference: I am not propelling my bicycle, and I cannot see what or who it is who controls the handlebars. I see no home lights in the gloaming shining for me, and yet however much I may long to dismount from my machine of life, however much I may dread my goal, I *must* go on; must, and the darkness is very great. For example, I love someone dearly, my whole life is wrapped up in that life, the life of my friend, in closest unity of heart and sentiment. Suddenly in a few

days, in a few hours, an unforeseen disease develops. Death strikes with savage knife. That friend is taken from me. I hear nothing, I see nothing more of him. I do not know where he is gone. I am left alone. All the little things we did and planned together bring a sharp pain to the heart as I think of them. They can never be again. Never. The future is desolate, the present is filled with an intolerable ache of hopeless longing. I pray till my heart breaks, but

> "No answer from on high
> Breaks the crystal spheres of silence,
> And no white wings downward fly."

Again I reflect. This world is one of millions: perhaps the most powerful telescope can only reveal our neighbours: perhaps there are not only worlds beyond worlds, but systems of worlds beyond systems, without any end: perhaps they are all or mostly peopled and the hosts of individual souls are without number. Then who am I? Shall I not be cast as rubbish to the void? Can I, even I, count for anything in this vast scheme of things? In this ordered chaos of blind fate, can there be a meaning which will satisfy my hungry heart?

Suddenly I hear these words:—"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall upon the ground without *your Father*: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows. Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before *my Father* who is in heaven."

"*Your Father, my Father,* who is in heaven." Who said that? Jesus. Ah! but it may be a gloss, an interpolation, something borrowed from Hillel, who knows? How can I be sure that He said it? How can I *know* that it is true? Look abroad, what do you find? Others suffering like you and passing through a like experience into a holy peace. How can they be peaceful and patient when you

are hopeless and sad? Question them. They will tell you that the love of Jesus Christ has comforted them, that in learning to know Him they have learnt to know God as a loving Father, that the presence of His love and the sense of His sympathy is so real and abiding that against the seeming cruelty of a bitter bereavement, there is no rebellion, but through it all a sense of sweet surrender to a Heavenly Will.

> "I know not," (says one of these) "where His islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air,
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond His love and care."

Climb the ladder of history. In every age you will find this human witness to the power of the revelation of Jesus, until you come step by step to Jesus Himself. In the biographies of saints, the sufferings of martyrs, the daily itinerary of wayfaring men, in the experience of cultured and ignorant, rich and poor, slave and free, the chain of evidence is unbroken. Why should you set it aside? It has its source in the dynamic personality of the suffering Christ. In the face of this broadening stream of influence you are not compelled to found your belief on an isolated text. Moreover, the words quoted from Matthew are harmonious with the whole atmosphere of the Gospels and whatever may be true of passages or fragments, no historical or literary criticism of real weight and insight will tolerate the supposition that they are altogether false. Read any able rationalist book, and there are none more able than J. M. Robertson's, and you will feel that while there may be much or little to modify in the historical details, the attempt to destroy the historicity of Jesus, or to deny Him His broad characteristics as we know them in the pages of the New Testament, lands us in the insuperable difficulty of explaining the Christian Church, and still more the living power of Christianity, in progressive religious and social thought and life to-day. You cannot dig a huge hole in

history and expect us to be satisfied if no attempt is made to fill it up. Yet in effect that is what the rationalist plea amounts to. All this evidence of trustful faith in the love of a Heavenly Father, even when victoriously submitted to the sternest tests of which life is capable, is to go for nothing. The fact that before Christ there is no similar force of comforting assurance is to be lightly regarded, and the profound gulf which separates the life and death of Socrates, beautiful and moving though it was, from the life and death of Jesus, is to have no significance. I think we may safely say that, be the exact historical truth about Jesus what it may, there came with Him into the life of men a unique revelation of the Fatherhood of God—of a Divine love and sympathy, tender, infinite in its scope, caring individually for the countless millions of individual souls. True or false, this revelation has been of the deepest moment, it has profoundly influenced civilisation, and is directly or indirectly influencing it now. The pain of death and the mystery of life do, as a matter of tested experience, lose their terrors for those who are able, in the faith of God's Fatherhood, to fall back upon the strength of His everlasting arms. And as for the rationalists, I know nothing more wildly irrational than the chaos of universe where trustful love is a delusion and all the deepest instincts of the human heart have no correspondence with outward reality. Such a universe is unthinkable—a dreadful nightmare. From the loneliness of the noblest pagans, as of all those without a sense of God, oppressed with the weight of this weary world, the littleness of life and the uncertain hope of immortality, the Fatherhood of God has redeemed us.

But are we to stop here? Is this all that the revelation of Jesus implies? Does He simply draw aside the veil which hid the Father from us, or is there more? I think there is, and although it really flows from the revelation of the Fatherhood, we will treat it as a second and distinct consideration.

It is this, that in His message to the Individual, Jesus says *that Unity between Man and God is possible.*

Here again we are not dependent upon texts but have a "cloud of witnesses" who testify by their lives and writings that the veil between flesh and spirit is only thin to the eye of faith. Such men and women as St. Teresa and John Woolman, Mme. Guyon and George Fox, tell us in their different language the same story. They trusted the message of Jesus and they found, knew and possessed the love of God in their hearts. There can be no question that this possession was real, or if it *was* delusion then reality has no meaning. Delusive love does not radiate real warmth, and we have the witness of contemporaries to its magnetic and uplifting power.

But let us accept this and take our consideration under review—that unity between man and God is possible. There are two things that would make it impossible:—

First, the intellectual inability to see and know God, an inability removed by the revelation of the Fatherhood.

Second, the love of fleshly things, absorption in the lower or animal life, the deliberate choice of what, in the light of a higher revelation, we know to be evil—in a word, *sin.*

How is the second obstacle to be removed? What is the bearing of the teaching of the Fatherhood upon this terrible cause of separation?

Here we approach the central difficulties of the Christian position. It is in dealing with this aspect of the life of the soul that the use of theological terms, terms borrowed from the law courts, or from the old Jewish Rabbis, taken bodily from an ancient civilisation with its oriental modes of thought and expression, and set down, so to speak, without due adjustment or deduction, in our modern western life, has done untold mischief. There is nothing in the statement of Christian truth that is more generally unsatisfying than

the doctrine of the Atonement. There is nothing that needs to be stated with more careful regard to the use of terms, or which needs more emphatically a reinterpretation in closer accord with the facts of the spiritual life. Unreality is so generally felt in this connection that the doctrine of the Atonement is gradually being left out of the pulpit *repertoire*, and unfortunately a good deal is going with it that ought to be retained. Let us endeavour to keep to the rules we have already laid down, and express in as simple language as may be, what is involved in the removal of sin as a barrier between man and God.

In making this statement I would urge three governing considerations:—

First, that we should test everything by Christ's conception of the Fatherhood of God. Whatever is inconsistent with that view, as we gather it from the Gospel narratives, must be dismissed.

Secondly, that we keep steadily before us the conditions of Paul's education, his Rabbinical training, the atmosphere of Jewish tradition which formed his environment, and hold ourselves prepared to translate his language into modern terms which, while they express his inner meaning, discard his symbolism, much of which is not only offensive but unintelligible to the uninstructed Western mind.

Thirdly, that we put out of our thoughts all theological battle cries, and approach the question from the standpoint of men, conscious of shortcomings and sin, who long for a living and saving knowledge of Eternal Truth.

I leave the doctrinal and scripture proof texts which, by the by, are generally torn up violently by the roots from the soil in which they grew and thrown about as missiles, regardless of the controlling significance of the little word *context*—and make my statement in the light on the one

hand of Christ's teaching of God's Fatherhood, and on the other of man's spiritual need.

To take up the proof texts one by one would be to set the cart before the horse. We must first clearly grasp the root idea, and then we shall be at leisure to examine the proof texts as we please. This, I think, must be a private occupation, not only because time fails us, but because the public discussion of a series of isolated texts is the same thing as not seeing the wood for the trees.

In the first place, then, the revelation of the Fatherhood of God is unquestionably implied in the parable of the Prodigal Son. It is implied or directly stated elsewhere again and again, but nowhere is it suggested in such tender and luminous form. God is represented as loving the sinner and forgiving him because of his repentance. There is no suggestion of any other condition—indeed the Elder Son is rebuked because he grumbles at what he regards as the excessive attention paid to his erring brother. This little touch seems designed expressly to emphasize the simplicity of the terms upon which the sinner gains or regains the Divine favour. Now let us translate this from the Eastern parable into the conditions of our own experience. You are a father. A son of yours breaks away and goes wrong. He lives among dissolute companions, out of sight, out of touch with you and your ideas of life. You mourn in your heart for him. Your life is saddened by this great sorrow, for, of course, you love him notwithstanding. Something, some circumstance or some holy influence, no matter what, converts your son to your view of life. He bitterly regrets his wasted years. He returns and asks forgiveness in full and sincere repentance. What do you do? Do you hold him at arm's length and talk about satisfying your sense of justice? Do you say that in order to forgive, some one else must be punished on his behalf? Nothing of the kind. All the pent-up love of years flows out at the instant as you clasp him to your breast. He

might have had that love at any moment for the asking, upon the one condition of repentance, which indeed would be the condition of his desire. But has there been no punishment? Assuredly; there is never repentance without punishment. Repentance implies shame and bitter regret for what has been done wrongly, it implies the pain of acknowledged shortcoming, it implies the smart and rankle of an uneasy conscience and injured self-esteem. Repentance is the burning out of the old sin, the cauterising of the wounds of the soul; it is, it must be, a painful and an arduous process. And on the other side, you as a father have been bearing the burden of your son's sin. It has been a heavy weight upon your heart. It has taken away the sunshine from your life. Your son has been crucifying you, and you have borne pain for his sake. More than that, you have prayed and agonised for him in the secret of your closet. You have suffered vicariously—suffered for him.

Now suppose it is true that God was really in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Find me anything in the teaching and life of Jesus to suggest that the love and character of God are of a different stamp of goodness from that to which Jesus calls us. Does not the grand truth of His revelation lie rather in this, that in a unique Divine-Human Personality we find not a yawning gulf separating us hopelessly from God, but a point of living contact, a witness to the essential unity in character which binds man to God and God to man? "I show you the Father," He says, and "I and the Father are one. I stoop to speak your language, to tell you of a higher civilisation, a kingdom of heaven, and because I stoop to come within the reach of your intelligence, therefore the Father is greater than I, the creator is beyond your finite comprehension. But nevertheless in His essential character He is comprehensible. His love, His sympathy I show you here in my life and in its extreme issue upon the cross." There is nothing here, nothing whatever, to justify a departure from the teaching

of that wonderful parable of the Prodigal Son. God loves and forgives just in the same spirit in which a good earthly father loves and forgives. Ah, but you say, this destroys the terror of the Lord. If it is possible to come to God whenever we like, you say in effect, "Sin just as long as you please, and then when you are tired of it, give it up and turn to God." This might be a valid objection were it not for the condition of repentance. Sin carries its own bitter punishment with it, lust breeds satiety and loathing, and selfishness breeds a morose and sour spirit, joyless as a subterranean cavern. Hell is separation from God, and the longer we live in hell the harder it is to escape. Character congeals, as it grows it stiffens, and takes shape, ugly or beautiful according to our absence from God or His presence with us. There is indeed nothing weak or effeminate in the goodness of God as Jesus unfolds it. We speak of Jesus as the revealer, but remember that if He is the revealer of the Father, He is also the revealer of the sin that separates Him from His children. Let me quote Sabatier again:—

> "So far from blunting the edge of the moral law, He sharpens it as one sharpens a dissecting knife in order the better to pierce the living flesh and penetrate to the very joints and marrows; He infinitely answers the demands of the traditional ideal; from the outward act He descends to the inward feeling; He makes lust equal to adultery, and anger or hatred to murder itself. He tells His disciples to love their enemies, to pray for those who persecute them, to answer violence by gentleness, and injuries by love. He speaks thus not to weaken the vigour of righteousness, but sees in love and gentleness a higher righteousness, and the sole means of securing the final triumph of good over evil. That is why the righteousness of His friends exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. It is no longer dictated by an outward letter, but it has, for soul, the very spirit of the Father, and, for inward rule, the ideal the Master has lit up in the conscience: 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.'"

Yet more, Jesus is not only the revealer of the Fatherhood or of sin, He is the revealer of the agony of God's heart under the burden of the sin of the world—that agony which

a good earthly father feels for a lost and erring child. God knows the possibilities of the higher civilisation of the Kingdom of Heaven, and by this He measures earth's failures. He sees under every roof, into every heart; every drunken orgy, every scene of lust and crime, every secret thought, pure or foul, every motive, lofty or selfish, are naked in His sight. Think how sin, seen in all its horrid ugliness, must wound His purity, how His love, active, out-reaching, passionate, must yearn to save, to uplift and to redeem! Here the witness of the cross has its supreme mission. But what does the cross mean? It is alas, no uncommon stumbling block that theology takes symbolism, an expressive or suggestive phrase, literally, and works out its blundering thesis upon false assumptions. We talk, for example, of Jesus as the Son. Certainly He was the Son in His relation of filial perfect obedience to the Father, a relation in which He is for us the Way, the Truth and the Life, but I think we miss the deep significance of the Cross, if we set Jesus in antithesis to God and press the symbolism of the son too far. "I and the Father are one." That means to me that I think of God in terms of Jesus Christ, that I pray to Jesus as representing the Father to my consciousness, or to the Father as I see Him in Jesus. Carry that thought to Calvary itself. See in the Crucifixion not merely a martyr's death, not merely a passing gleam of God's love, certainly not a sacrifice to God carrying a legal significance, but in truth the flashing into light of an eternal fact, the nature of God's relation to sin, of the pain we inflict on His heart by our own wrongdoing. Here is the wonderful dynamic of the Cross. God calls you to Him. He shows you His suffering, He shows you the hatefulness of the sin that caused it, and in showing you His love, shows you the punishment of alienation from Him, the hell of the unrepentant, in which we must remain until repentance opens the gate for the prodigal and gives entrance for the free forgiveness and love of the Father's house. In Jesus,

in His life, and His death upon the cross, we are shown the nature of God, and the possibilities that are within our reach. We are shown the world as the Father sees it, are called to live in harmony with His will and purpose, to hate the sins that made Him mourn, to scale the barrier of sin and discover that the way of penitence lies open and direct to the Fatherly heart. No legal bargain, but a spiritual conflict, an inward change, the rejection of the living death of sin, the choice of the new birth, of the purified self, the conversion from a low and earthly to a high and spiritual standard of life and conduct—here you have the practical conditions of salvation, and in the active, free and holy love of God, ever seeking entrance, ever powerful if we but yield the gateway of our heart, is the substance of the Gospel. The revelation of God's Fatherhood and the possibility of unity with Him through Christ, meet the deep need of the soul for a centre of repose apart from the transitory interests and the things of time. Hear, then, the gentle appeal, "Come unto me and rest."

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear;
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.

Dear Name, the Rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding-place,
My never-failing treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace.

Jesus, my Shepherd, Saviour, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.

I would Thy boundless love proclaim
With every fleeting breath;
So shall the music of Thy Name
Refresh my soul in death."

III

WHAT HAS JESUS TO SAY TO THE STATE?

Scripture portion—Galatians v, 13–25

MANDELL CREIGHTON, late Bishop of London, in a most interesting letter to an old friend of his, writes as follows upon the subject-matter of faith—I quote fragmentarily:—

> "Pure reason leads nowhere. It is not a beginning. We act from the heart first, then the head explains. . . . Love is the motive power. Life is only explicable as part of a general purpose, and our life is the development of our personality. . . . This thought explains and justifies the nature of the revelation of God in Christ. God could be known in nature, in conscience, in history, but if He was to be thoroughly known, He must be known in a person. So Christ stands, the central fount of personality, who explains not my gifts, my attainments, my knowledge, my capacities, but *me*, that which lies beyond these, uses them, and gives them meaning and coherence. So He stands, the sustainer of all men, and I am led to Him by all my experience. . . . Relationships, founded on a sense of lasting affection are the sole realities of life. . . . Faith is personal trust in a person."

I read this letter after preparing my last lecture, "What has Jesus to say to the Individual?" and the sentences I quote from it seem to me both to sum up our argument so far as we have conducted it, and to introduce us to the question we have now to discuss—"What has Jesus to say to the State?"

If God has revealed His character in a personality and if that personality is Jesus Christ, then we are able to start from the knowledge of God's Fatherhood, we are able to interpret that fatherhood as involving active

personal love for individual souls, freely and continually given, and to recognise in repentance the means by which we can convert the knowledge of the Divine Love into a realised fact, consciously accepting it as the propelling and guiding force in our lives. We have recognised that the great barrier to a living knowledge of God is not so much the mystery of being, with its vision of the bottomless chasms of space and the endless reaches of eternity, not so much difficulties of intellectual apprehension, as it is the terrible fact of sin, the conscious choice of selfish views of life, of mean and unworthy ends which effectually prohibit that true companionship with God which is the "saint's everlasting rest." Unity with God implies unity with Him in thought and action, what Paul meant by the mystic phrase, "being hid with Christ in God." To achieve this we have to burn out our old sins, to cauterise the wounds of the soul, to give our desire for holiness, and God's desire for us, free play in our hearts. We have to effect a dynamic union of that which is best in us with that which we know through Christ to be in the Father.

Out of such a union there spring certain consequences, both for the individual and for the state, consequences which are summed up in the word brotherhood, fruits which have been catalogued by an Apostolic writer as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control."

Unfortunately the brotherhood of man is now a glib platitude, commonly accepted side by side with a view of life which is largely at variance with the essential spirit of brotherhood as expressed in Jesus.

We cannot, however, rest satisfied with mere pious patter, and we must ask ourselves what brotherhood ought to mean in recognised facts of experience, when taken as the corollary of God's declared Fatherhood.

In the first place, then, the teaching of Jesus, whether to the individual or to the state, is the teaching of social

love. Love cannot be self-contained. The Gospels tell us this again and again in parables like that of the Good Samaritan, and in more direct teaching: "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second *like unto it* is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy, but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven."

These are familiar, not to say hackneyed, quotations, continually repeated if too seldom put in practice, and sufficiently illustrate the justice of Mandell Creighton's deduction:—"Relationships founded on a sense of lasting affection are the sole realities of life."

The revelation of Jesus is indeed a revelation of relationships, relationship with God, its character and possibility, and relationship with man. God is social, man is social, because God is Love, and because love expresses itself through personal relationships.

Dr Rufus Jones, in his "Social Law in the Spiritual World," writes:—

> "The older views of God regarded Him as being in another world, of totally other nature from our own and as being so absolute in Himself as to need nothing from us. These views did not fit our New Testament, but had been formed on the basis of a now dead philosophy and had become fixed and traditional. The doctrine of the conjunct and social nature of personality has made them impossible views for those who think. We realise now that our views of God must be grounded in the eternal nature of things, and conform to the inherent facts of personal life, and that means that this, the conjunct, or spiritual 'group' characteristic, must run up to the highest scale of life; that even God finds His life and joy by going out of Himself and bringing other lives to Himself."

This view agrees at least with that prayer uttered under the olive trees at night by the Son of Man in agony, "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one."

And if we marvel how John could possibly have set down such a prayer in writing, it is at least organic with the whole life and teaching of the Master whom he portrayed with such rare intuition and sympathy. It is the teaching of the parable of the Vine and the branches, the thought of the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Professor Everett has put the case for us in a modern version of the old imagery, found in his "Immortality and other Essays."

> "We ask the leaf, 'Are you complete in yourself?' and the leaf answers, 'No, my life is in the branches.' We ask the branch, and the branch answers, 'No, my life is in the trunk.' We ask the trunk, and it answers, 'No, my life is in the root.' We ask the root, and it answers, 'No, my life is in the trunk and the branches and the leaves. Keep the branches stripped of leaves and I shall die.' So it is with the great tree of being. Nothing is completely or merely individual."

No! nothing is merely individual. The supreme question of religion is personal salvation, the personal struggle to overcome evil and escape from the prison of selfishness into the freedom of sonship, but it is not individual. If we seek our lives we lose them. One of the most beautiful souls ever lit by the love of Christ was John Woolman, a poor unlearned working man of New Jersey, the friend of the slave and the apostle of the simple life.

Upon one occasion he lay sick upon his bed of illness. Hear what he says in that journal which Channing called "the sweetest autobiography in the language," and which Charles Lamb tells us to get by heart. Lying as it were in a trance he forgot his own name—I quote his words:—

"Being then desirous to know who I was, I saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy colour, between the south and the east; and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be and live, and that I was mixed with them, and that henceforth I might not consider myself as a distinct or separate being. In this state I remained several hours. I then heard a soft melodious voice, more pure and harmonious than any I had heard with my ears before; I believe it was the voice of an angel, who spake to the other angels; the words were—'John Woolman is dead.' I soon remembered that I was John Woolman, and being assured that I was alive in the body, I greatly wondered what that heavenly voice could mean. I believed beyond doubting that it was the voice of an holy angel, but as yet it was a mystery to me.

"I was then carried in spirit to the mines, where poor oppressed people were digging rich treasures for those called Christians; and heard them blaspheme the name of Christ; at which I was grieved; for His name to me was precious. I was then informed that these heathen were told that those who oppressed them were the followers of Christ; and they said among themselves, 'if Christ directed them to use us in this sort, then Christ is a cruel tyrant.'"

All this time the song of the angel remained a mystery; and in the morning my dear wife and some others coming to my bedside, I asked them if they knew who I was; and they telling me I was John Woolman, thought I was light-headed; for I told them not what the angel said, nor was I disposed to talk much to anyone, but was very desirous to get so deep that I might understand this mystery. . . .

"As I lay still for a time, I at length felt Divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak; and I then said, 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.' Then the mystery was opened, and I perceived there was joy in heaven over a sinner who had repented, and that the language 'John Woolman is dead,' meant no more than the death of my own will."

Here is the practical meaning of the teaching of Jesus, the flowering of Christian character in the fragrance of its proper bloom. It is the justification of the social gospel which men are preaching to-day. And the Gospel *must*

be social. What we understand by Evangelicalism—that is the Gospel expressed in the prevailing theology of fifty years ago, under the formula of the plan of salvation, was strong in its personal note, but its urgent plea to escape the wrath to come weakened at once the thought of God's Fatherhood and its effective bearing on the oneness of humanity.

It almost became at times a "sauve qui peut," a hurried retreat, without thought of fallen comrades, from the devastating range of the enemies' guns. I shrink even from an unintentional travesty of a movement which has worked miracles of redemption amongst the lost and degraded of our kind, miracles performed by men who felt that they must work as firemen work to save the helpless from the flames of a burning building. Yet this quotation from a notable sermon on the "Resurrection of the Dead" has its significance. I take it from an article in the *Independent Review*.

> "When thou diest thy soul will be tormented alone; that will be a hell for it; but at the Day of Judgment thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin hells, thy soul sweating drops of blood and thy body suffering with agony. In fire exactly like that we have on earth thy body will be asbestos-like, for ever unconsumed, all thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, every nerve a string on which the devil shall forever play his diabolical tune of hell's unutterable lament."

Read that with the parable of the prodigal son! The thing is impossible. In the baleful gleam of those *post-mortem* terrors it is not difficult to see that the affairs of this world shrivelled to ashes, that morbid fears grew apace, that a spiritual selfishness, if I may use the term, found easy entrance into hearts prepared by terror. Other-worldliness with its paralysing influence upon practical work, its spurious asceticism, its transference of all hope, and of all the fruitful energies of the soul to objects beyond the limits of this human life, weakened the social conscience of the

religious, and made it possible for inconsistencies in the social system to pass unchallenged. That which was strong and helpful in Evangelicalism sprang from the personal devotion to a personal Father. This faith, struggling with the incongruous elements of a creed based in no small measure upon a misinterpretation of the office and message of Jesus Christ, has survived, and will doubtless emerge clearer and more robust, because no longer trammelled by a false theology.

It will lead us, nay, it *is* leading us, to seek here on this earth, and among the sins and sorrows of men, the materials for building the Holy City of God. It is not that the need for salvation is any less urgent, or any less personal than it was to the preacher who heard the terrible cry of the eternally lost ringing in his ears. It is rather that we know God better, trust Him more, and find not *only* beyond the grave the promise of His kingdom. Salvation must still retain its personal meaning (perhaps in the inevitable reaction from such teaching it has lost too much of this), but we give it, we must give it, a wider interpretation.

> "Tis not enough to weep my sins;
> 'Tis but one step to heaven;
> When I am kind to others, then
> I know myself forgiven."

We must learn the meaning of God's fatherhood by giving the fullest content to the meaning of brotherhood. We must recognise that because the individual stands in need of redemption from the power of selfishness, that therefore the State, that Society, needs salvation, and we must set about it in the spirit of William Blake when he exclaimed:—

> "I will not cease from mental fight,
> Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
> Till we have built Jerusalem,
> In England's green and pleasant land."

What then has Jesus to say to the State? We must answer this by repeating what Jesus has to say to the individual. He shows us in Himself the supremacy of unselfish love. He directs us to God as its source and centre. He calls us to walk in the *way* of His sacrifice, to trust in the *truth* of His unfolding, to live the *life* which he shows us to be at one with the life of the Father. Our existence, He says, is no aimless wandering, there is behind it no mockery of hope, no cruel sport with the heart's desire. Life has an eternal meaning which passes into vivid reality as we understand the message of Jesus and grasp the profound significance of His personality.

The way, the truth, the life. He is the reality of God, the interpretation of God's character, expressed in human speech, in a human life, the Divine made personal, the Infinite touching the finite, God at one with humanity, the unseen visible in the flesh, the soul's ladder reaching from the known to the unknown, in a word at once the dynamic and the goal of spiritual evolution.

But I repeat, that which He reveals to the individual cannot be confined to the individual. The selfless love, the sympathy, and the passion of the cross are forever radiating outwards. Love is social. The standard for the individual is to be the standard for society. The Kingdom of God, the higher civilisation of which Jesus was the messenger and prophet, has its seat in the heart, but its outward expression is an inevitable consequence of its inward reality, nay, it is the *test* of that reality. If, for example, the Fatherhood of God is real, and the brotherhood of man means that all men are the children of God, then the term brotherhood covers the whole human race and not merely the Anglo-Saxon, of whom in these imperial days we hear so much to the exclusion of the loftier and the larger thought of the Gospel. "There can be," says the Apostle, who had broken with the narrowness of Jewish tradition, "neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond

nor free, there can be no male and female, for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus."

There is no national limit to the family of God. The tribal deity is dethroned. Most men, whether they are professed Christians or not, have a pretty clear idea of what individual fidelity to the life of Jesus would involve. They know it means unselfishness, the tender service of sympathy, the triumph of chastity, the surrender of the lower appetites and desires to the control of the higher impulses of the soul, become urgent and authoritative through the knowledge of God in Christ. They see Jesus "clothed in the irresistible might of meekness" and they know that to believe in Him really means staking everything upon the victorious power of holy, selfless, redeeming love. In the secret of their hearts men acknowledge this to be the greatest thing in the world, and whenever it is found in its pure, Christlike form, as we find it for example in St. Francis of Assisi and John Woolman, its wonderful magnetic and transforming power is at once felt. But most men, whether because they love the dust-heap, like the man with the muck-rake, and refuse to see the angel with the crown, or because they are too busy and have not time to think, or because they have more confidence in the world's prudence and the world's methods, are unwilling or afraid to make this great venture of faith. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. . . . thou shalt have treasure in heaven, . . . Follow me."

Ah! that is just what we will not do. We cling to the shekels of earth, and the treasures of heaven kick the beam. Our hesitancy to accept the full practical consequences of the Gospel is magnified in international conduct, which it goes far to explain. The individual has made some progress, be it ever so small, towards the Christian ideal of conduct. To kill a man in a quarrel is murder, to take his goods by force is theft, to ravage and destroy a man's property is violence, be the provocation what it may. To boast of your wealth, pedigree, strength, and to scoff openly at the

weakness or poverty of your neighbour is bad form, not to be tolerated in polite society. Publicly to defame another's character is libel. But mark the transformation when we pass from the conduct of single individuals to the conduct of a group of individuals acting as a nation. To kill a man in a private quarrel is murder; as a national quarrel it is a "regrettable necessity," rewarded however by every mark of public honour and popular acclaim.

To take goods by force in private life is theft: in national life the talk is of national destiny, spheres of influence, annexation; and under the plea of accepting the white man's burden, private companies exploit the lands of savages for the sake of dividends.

To boast of wealth and scoff at poverty in private life is bad form; in national life the parade of ships and troops, the loud trumpeting of orators, the slighting comments upon the shortcomings and peculiarities of the foreigner who serves in the Divine ordering as a counterfoil to our own virtues—all this is accepted by the crowd without question as the evidence of patriotism. The dominant note is self-praise, self-interest, and when the flag, country, national honour are supposed to be at stake, the muddy depths are stirred by a yellow press, and there emerges, naked and unashamed, the sheer blind hatred of the primitive savage. In the heat of quarrel brotherhood goes to the winds. Both disputants reach out for their bludgeons prepared to strike, and as passion rises the very pulpits join in the shouting. "Thank God," cries a Vicar, "we have done with the cowardice of the Sermon on the Mount." Love your enemies, did you say? Nay, says a Canon of the Church, "the Lord Jesus never says a word against war. . . . The history of the world is full of wars, thus must war be congenial to the mind of God in His evolution of humanity. What does God care for death? What does God care for pain?"

Writes another minister of religion, this time breaking into verse:—

> "And as I note how nobly natures form
> Under the war's red rain, I deem it true
> That He who made the earthquake and the storm,
> Perhaps makes battles too."

John Newton, who wrote the famous hymn,

> "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,
> In a believer's ear"

was a slaver, and as he paced his deck, beneath which the victims of a foul traffic lay in chains herded like cattle, could say with perfect truth that he never enjoyed such sweet communion with his Maker as in the religious reveries of those deck promenades.

We must not judge too harshly those ministers of religion who, like John Newton, fail to realise all the significance of their words. It required for a generation the concentrated focus of Christian feeling and thought upon the iniquity of the slave traffic, to dispel the moral blindness of those who in all sincerity defended it. It will require a similar concentration to dispel the moral blindness which associates militarism with the love of God.

Read this extract from the newspapers as an example, side by side with the assertion that "war must be congenial to the mind of God," and remembering Him whose life was peace, and who called men from their loneliness and suffering to come unto Him and rest, we cannot for one moment justify the passions of war in His name.

> "The temper of the combatants (I quote from the *Yorkshire Post*) has reached an absolutely merciless pitch. No quarter is given on either side, and flags of truce and surrender are disregarded.
>
> In one of the recent assaults 600 Japanese hoisted the white flag but the Russians ignored it, and the Japanese in the rear, enraged at the action of their comrades, assisted the Russians to

shoot them down. Every man fell, and the piteous appeals of the wounded were unheeded. Within a week the last arm had signalled its unregarded prayer, and the shambles where the 600 had fallen was a place of horror."

The terrible gap between the morality of individual and of national conduct, where theft becomes annexation with its thousand excuses, where boastful pride becomes patriotism, and a quarrel leading to violence and murder becomes war with an army for a bludgeon, is indeed one of those fatal inconsistencies which go far to discredit Christianity in the eyes of thoughtful doubters at home and of the heathen abroad. The missionary in China with the Sermon on the Mount in his hand, sadly confesses the obstacle presented by that criminal policy which literally forced a poisonous drug upon the Chinaman at the point of the bayonet; and when we talk of evangelising South Africa, we may well wonder how the Kaffir will regard the brotherly love of Christians after we have paraded before him the long panorama of a cruel and devastating war?

Already we ridicule the duel, demanding that individuals shall settle differences in courts of law, and there is no logical defence for denying the same principle in the intercourse of nations. International wars must go the way of private and tribal wars, and international differences must be settled, as already they are often settled, in international courts.

It is true that Jesus never categorically condemned war, as He never categorically condemned slavery, but both are alien to His teaching, foreign to the whole temper of His Gospel, and a defiance of the Fatherhood of God. Nor is the Old Testament any justification. The distinction drawn in the Gospels is explicit.

"Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy, but I say unto you, Love your enemies."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning exclaims:—

> "And soon we shall have thinkers in the place of fighters. . . .
> What ye want is light, indeed
> God's light organised
> In some high soul."

The thinkers, men like Herbert Spencer and John Morley, have already exposed the costly futility of militarism, its intellectual absurdity, its direct opposition to all true social progress, its menace to the liberty of the people; but that which will overthrow it will be "God's light organised" in a Christian community. For the sin of militarism is that it delays the coming of the Kingdom, as it is the sin of the Church of Christ that it wavers between the Spirit of the Cross and the spirit of the sword.

It may be true that in the progress of evolution war and slavery have been inevitable factors; it is true that even to-day men are not ready for disarmament, and it is unquestioned that, as in the case of shipwrecks or mine disasters, war has been and is the theatre for the display of a lofty heroism and a noble self-sacrifice. But just as we would not dream of arranging for annual shipwrecks to encourage heroism, so we cannot maintain war for the same purpose; and if evolution means progress, if civilisation as Christ foreshadowed it has any worth, any beauty, any moral grandeur, any spiritual grace, we must seek all means of escape from past traditions to a deeper and truer view of life.

It is the duty of the Christian Church to realise in common experience and intercourse the ideal of her Master. Were she consistent with His teaching the armies of Europe would melt like snow in spring-time, and the vast enginery of war pass like an evil dream.

This thought brings us from the consideration of international relations to that which must ultimately transform them. I mean the spiritual temper of the peoples in whose

name acts of war and deeds of violence are done. What Jesus has to say to the State concerns not only the question of foreign politics, but most intimately the welfare of the State itself. Raise the spiritual temperature of the people, and instead of the spectacle of Christian ministers writing heathen apologies for a barbarous survival, war disappears. Raise the spiritual temperature of the people, and instead of twisting the saying, "The poor ye have always with you" into an excuse for the selfishness of wealth, the grinding poverty of a third of the population becomes an evil too heavy to be borne.

I remember hearing the battle-hymn of the Republic sung by thousands in Broadway, before the office of the *New York Journal*, during the Spanish-American war. The shameful sequence of events in the Philippines was still a matter of unwritten history, but even then, in the fierceness of the crowd, thinking more of the destruction of the American warship *Maine* (for the words "Remember the Maine" hung in great letters before their eyes) than of the Cuban *reconcentradoes*, and intoxicated by the magnificent roll of the music, the last verse jarred painfully in the contrast of its spirit:—

> "In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
> With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me,
> As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
> While God is marching on."

Aye! take your revenge and "Remember the Maine" while God is marching on. The scene has an impressive witness to the facility with which men bind up the name of Christ with ideas altogether at variance with his Gospel. We may, however, redeem that hymn from its relation to the slaughter of men, and accept it as an interpretation of the message of Jesus to the State:—

> "As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free
> While God is marching on."

"He that seeketh his life shall lose it and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." If brotherhood involves the disappearance of militarism and the growth of a fraternity of nations, what does it involve within the community itself? In what sense are we to die to make men free? Not perhaps in a literal sense, though this has happened and will happen again, but certainly in a spiritual sense, in the sense in which John Woolman realised it when he saw in his vision that the loss of his name meant the death of his own will.

I think anyone who has at all escaped from the frozen grip of indifference, who has entered even a little into the sufferings of Christ, must have felt more than a vague unrest at the extravagant indulgence of the rich, and the miserable stunted life of the poor. There is in it something so flagrantly inconsistent with the spirit of Him who came as a servant to minister, as a physician to heal, and as a Saviour to redeem. With its stern struggle for bare existence, with its luxurious vice and its hopeless penury, its aggressive selfishness and its bitter despair, our social fabric is remote indeed from the city of brotherly love, the city of our dreams.

Hell, said someone, is a place much like London. We may reject that exaggeration, but the social worker will tell you that in tens of thousands of homes the spirit of hell does in truth reign. The problem of that great city crushes as one contemplates it, yet London only repeats in the gathered volume of some five million voices what we hear in fainter tones elsewhere. Thirty per cent of our people live more or less in the abyss of poverty. The imagination cannot interpret that fact. The most we can do is to lift a corner of the curtain that hides the buried lives of the unfortunate from us.

Consider this deliberate statement made after a careful survey of the poverty of a neighbouring city, namely, "that the wages paid for unskilled labour are insufficient to provide food, shelter and clothing, adequate to maintain

a family of moderate size in a state of bare physical efficiency."

The writer I quote continues:—

> "And let us clearly understand what 'bare physical efficiency' means. A family living upon the scale allowed for in this estimate must never spend a penny on railway fare or omnibus. They must never go into the country unless they walk. They must never purchase a half-penny newspaper or spend a penny to buy a ticket for a popular concert. They must write no letters to absent children, for they cannot afford to pay for the postage. They must never contribute anything to their church or chapel, or give any help to a neighbour which costs them money. They cannot save, nor can they join sick club or Trade Union, because they cannot pay the necessary subscriptions. The children must have no pocket-money for dolls, marbles or sweets. The father must smoke no tobacco and must drink no beer. The mother must never buy any pretty clothes for herself or for her children, the character of the family wardrobe as of the family diet being governed by the regulation, 'Nothing must be bought but that which is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of physical health, and what is bought must be of the plainest and most economical description.' Should a child fall ill, it must be attended by the parish doctor; should it die, it must be buried by the parish. Finally, the wage-earner must never be absent from his work for a single day."

These are hard conditions, but beneath these there are yet lower depths of misery.

Need we wonder that the tender conscience of John Woolman was burdened by the sense of social injustice, or that he cried out continually against the selfishness of the rich. His counsel, steeped in the wisdom and spirit of his Divine Master, is faithful and searching in its loving solicitude:—

> "It is good," he says, "for those who live in fulness to cultivate tenderness of heart, and to improve every opportunity of being acquainted with the hardships and fatigues of those who labour for their living, and thus to think seriously with themselves: Am I influenced by true charity in fixing all my demands? Have I no desire to support myself in expensive customs, because my acquaintances live in such customs?

"If a wealthy man, on serious reflection, finds a witness in his own conscience that he indulges himself in some expensive habits, which might be omitted consistently with the true design of living, and which, were he to change places with those who occupy his estate, he would desire to be discontinued by them—whoever is thus awakened will necessarily find the injunction binding, 'Do ye even so to them.' Divine Love imposeth no rigorous or unreasonable commands, but graciously points out the spirit of brotherhood and the way to happiness in attaining which it is necessary that we relinquish all that is selfish."

Time does not permit us to pursue this subject, nor is this the place for elaborate schemes of reform. We are not indeed concerned with them to-night. We are concerned rather with that view of life and its responsibility which arises naturally from the teaching of Jesus to the individual and to the state, and which, as we are faithful to His conception of God's Fatherhood and of the all-embracing unity of the family relationship in His great household, we shall accept as our guide. We cannot live to ourselves, even if we would. It matters infinitely *how* we live to others. Rooted in the love and power of Christ we shall not dare to be satisfied with spasmodic service. Brotherhood is not a question of bazaars, of subscriptions, of occasional charities paid as doles to conscience, or the gifts of lightly missed etceteras from the full basket of pleasure. It is the question of a life of stewardship given in all its energies and purposes to the common good. No other life is the complete Christian life. No other life is at once so hard and so easy. It is the way of the Cross, but its guerdon is a crown. Let us then make the venture of faith. The steady, persistent bending of all powers of mind and heart to the formation of a real fraternity of free, equal spirits, whether it be by the laborious study of economics, or the homely offices of neighbourly love, whether it be by the public advocacy of an ennobling cause, or the private outpouring of the healing gift of sympathy, shall prove the golden age sung by saints and seers no unavailing dream. This is the flowing

of the sap from the Vine into the branches, the unity of the root with the leaves, the work of Christ continued in His disciples who realise their lives in Him and find life's sacrament in surrender.

"To lessen the distresses of the afflicted and to increase the happiness of the creation, here," says John Woolman, "we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable, so that to turn all we possess into the channel of universal love, becomes the business of our lives."

"The world sits at the feet of Christ,
Unknowing, blind and unconsoled;
It yet shall touch His garment's fold,
And feel the heavenly Alchemist
Transform its very dust to gold."*

*Whittier.

IV

FAITH AND LIFE

Scripture Portion—Ephesians iii, 14–19

In discussing the inner meaning of Religion we shall need to preface our consideration by the recognition of some current facts and difficulties.

We may, for instance, as we observe the striking statistical evidence of growing indifference to public congregational worship, query what is worship? And the question would be far from untimely. Judging by the facts there is apparently increasing dissatisfaction with forms and ceremonies, however ancient or historic. Even the basis of church fellowship appears to be under review. Men are groping after some system more human and intimate, which shall express in a less rigid form of worship the gathering sense of social needs. An enquiry on these lines would however, soon make it evident that we must go deeper than social needs to explain the cause of the unrest laid bare by the London census and the investigations of Charles Booth. These reveal a widespread sense of unreality, affecting not only those who stray abroad to graze in alien pastures, but running through the most carefully tended flocks. The attempt to give a warmer social colouring to church life is full of hope and far from superfluous, yet it is continually frustrated of its object by the want of intellectual and spiritual grasp upon the vital truths of the soul's experience. It is not enough to change methods, to set up an institutional church with clubs, smoke-room, games-room, lectures,

reading circles, and the like: that which is of supreme importance, which overshadows every question of church organisation, and which really leads us to the inner meaning of religion is the question of the message. Can we say that the view of life through which a congregation has been gathered is quick with the compelling power of a great unrealised spiritual and social ideal? Is it a view of life at all, or is it only a dead tradition?—a concession to the conventional respectability of the modern Pharisee who wears a top hat instead of phylacteries, and prays in the front pew instead of in the market-place? Is the sermon preached because it is the accepted thing that it should be preached, something that is as much a part of the settled constitution as the Union Jack and the British Lion, or because the preacher has something within him from God which *must* find utterance, which he *dare* not withhold?

In answering such questions we should finally be driven to conclude that worship consists not in singing hymns, not in preaching, not in listening to sermons, though all these functions have their necessary place in public gatherings for worship, both as stimulants and as means, but that worship, the end to which these means might minister, implies the individual movement of the soul towards God, the concentration of all its energies in the inward silence of the heart upon the realisation of the fact and presence of the sympathy and life of God. "The sort of belief which religion requires is one which is immediate, very vivid, very moving to the affections, and very influential upon action." This is the belief which should grow out of worship, a true and conscious union of the soul with the will and power and love of the unseen Spirit.

Such worship cannot be performed by proxy; no priest, no minister, no other person can take our place in this supreme effort of the soul; it must be our own proper work and exercise. It lies beyond ritual or sermon, nay, it is

best performed in outward silence (a silence for which all denominations, and not only the Society of Friends, might arrange with real spiritual profit in their public worship), when the individual, stripped of all self-deception, is drawn back from his dependence upon external things, upon sweet music, for example, or upon pulpit eloquence, and forced down on to the bare realities of the inward life.

The questions raised by this discussion will carry us a step further. If there is unreality in worship, we say that there is need of a living message going home to the heart and conscience, of union with God as the fruit of worship. But how can we have these without faith? How can faith be, unless we can in some way or other understand God, see Him and know Him in history, and in contemporary life? Can we thus see Him and know Him? *May* we, in short, *believe* in God? The difficulties are great. The problem of life is so complex. Life is so profound a mystery. Whence came man; whither is he going? What is the meaning of sin, pain, death, the seeming injustice which metes out at the very cradle luxury and pleasure to one, poverty or disease to another? Behind the conflict of existence, the fatalism of law, the terrors of an unknown eternity and of fathomless space, what is there? Is there any fact which can save me from that intolerable loneliness which assails me even in the midst of friends, and the affairs of life? Is there any fact in the universe which can drive out the secret despair bred in my heart by the sense of my impotence, and my insignificance, one as I am of countless millions coming out of the black unknown and passing out again through death to the black unknown, upon one only among countless millions of worlds?

Is there any fact in the universe that can rob death of its sting, the grave of its victory, and give nobility and purpose to my being?

To seek our answer we may explore in three directions which can be described respectively as the *intellectual*, the

scientific, and the *personal*. The intellectual we shall find inadequate, because God, the ultimate fact of which we are in search, is not evolved at the end of a process of reasoning in mere "quod erat demonstrandum" fashion. The intellectual faculties of reasoning and logic have of course their most important place, but they are only valid in co-operation with other faculties of observation and apprehension which the intellectual method, followed exclusively, does not call into play. You cannot argue a man into belief in God. You cannot arrive at God's character, even if you can prove His existence, merely by the sequence of logical demonstrations.

The scientific we shall find inadequate, because by itself the study of nature cannot lead us to the knowledge of a God who answers the questions of the heart and satisfies its craving. Nature shows us law in every nook and cranny of the universe, but it cannot reveal a God of personal love. Some people think it can, but the real truth is that, like the Roman Catholic in his cult of the Virgin, they read into the goddess or principle they call Nature that which they have unconsciously borrowed from Jesus Christ. To be strictly scientific in the accepted sense of the term is to be strictly agnostic. Science has its legitimate fields and its legitimate methods, although, like the theologian at whom he so often girds, the scientist is not without his prejudices and his narrow dogmatism. He is to be respected when he speaks according to what he knows. His knowledge is at least something more learned by man about God. Unless we are to fall into an ancient fallacy and exclude God from His universe, we must regard every fact of science as a fresh revelation of His creative activity and power. Nevertheless, scientific knowledge lies on a plane different from that on which the knowledge we seek is to be found. The fact that radium emits heat without apparent diminution in bulk, or that there are magnetic streams radiating from the

sun, and disturbing our magnetic needles at regular intervals, or even the biological fact of our descent from the anthropoid apes and all that this descent implies, cannot help a man to resist a present temptation, or to face death with Christian confidence and hope. Science by itself, is, and must always remain, powerless to give us a God who will draw out the tendrils of the human heart towards Himself.

We turn then to the personal method. We reflect that we are after all personal, and that all our contacts with each other are personal. We may, if we please, denounce an anthropomorphic God, by which terrible formula I suppose we mean that God is the mere gigantic shadow of our reflected selves cast, like the spectre of the Brocken, upon the clouds of our imagination. But in any case, unless we can apprehend God personally, that is, within the limits of our personal nature and understanding, or to put it in other words, unless God can interpret Himself in some way within the limits fixed by our human conditions and capacity, He must, by the terms of the case, remain for ever invisible and unknowable to man.

We are bound to fall back on experience. Is it true that God has never so interpreted Himself? Does the intellectual evidence, such as it is, for a controlling mind in the universe, does the practical evidence, such as it is, of coherence and purpose in Nature, unite with any evidence of personal experience which permits us to add the dynamic formula "God is Love"? In both cases the answer of contemporary experience and of history is unquestionably *yes*, it does. Then where is this revelation? In unnumbered human lives. Martyrs and saints, famous in story, plain men and women whose memory no illuminated Acta Sanctorum has rescued from oblivion, whose chronicles are the tales of mean streets, unite in an uninterrupted witness which flows forward, a broadening stream of testimony through the years and the centuries. What is the source of this testimony? There

are many springs more or less pure and constant, under the shadow of the Himalayas, among the hills of Greece, in the plains of China and of Egypt, but there is only one spring adequate in volume, altogether pure and inexhaustible, a spring which upon a time broke forth in the hills of Galilee and now flows continually in the heart of man. The test of living power in actual experience points to one Divine Human life in history, as the supreme revelation of God. That life is the life of Jesus Christ. That life interprets all other lives governed by its spirit, that life has brought with it a view of God which although it does not explain the mystery of being, makes our individual striving intelligible, and gives the Divine sanction to all that is pure, holy and unselfish. It identifies the highest love we know in man with the character and purpose of the eternal governing power of the universe. This is not theory, but a statement of experimental truth tested by the severest methods known to men and devils. The fires of persecution and the tortures of the rack, or better still (for intellectual obstinacy or the tenderness of conscience in mistaken beliefs may bear these tests), the humdrum of everyday life and the witness of character blossoming to beauty under pain and sorrow—these tests have been and are continually applied, with the result that the faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ, after nineteen centuries of conflict, misinterpretation and criticism, remains dominant and victorious.

This is surely a stupendous fact which no spectre of the Brocken theory can possibly explain. It looms so large in history that it would be childish, nay, unscientific, to brush it aside. In any earnest quest after God the enquirer must sooner or later come face to face with Jesus Christ.

But then arises the difficulty of the Scripture records. Is the Bible inspired? Are not the Gospels challenged as historical records? And if we are to give up the infallibility of Scripture how can we rely upon the historicity of Jesus?

The trouble with such questions is that people continually forget that the real basis of faith is not, never has been, and never will be, an infallible book. The Bible is the gathered literature of a people, intensely human, wide in its range and variety, unequal in its spiritual value. Its inspiration is to be judged by the simple test of its ability to inspire and its value lies, not in its supposed infallibility, but in its record of phenomena unique in human experience, illustrating the working of God in the human heart, and, above all, the message, life and death of Jesus Christ, and the beginnings of the Christian Church. The theory of an infallible text is purely mechanical, not spiritual, and inasmuch as the theory dehumanises the Bible, while distorting its really divine quality into a parody of the fact, it has worked untold mischief, destroying the sense of reality and lowering the Bible to the level of an idol or a fetish. We may indeed welcome in the higher critic and all that he signifies a return to an intelligent belief in the divine worth of the Scriptures, confident that scholarly and reverent study of material so rich in spiritual teaching must be increasingly fruitful. Truth can never be destroyed, in the fiercest light of criticism it can never suffer.

If some misconceptions have to be removed, if here we took for history what was really folk-lore, or there we read as canonical a text that was interpolated, faith will ultimately be clearer and stronger for the correction. But of this we may be perfectly sure, that whatever may be the ultimate results of the development of honest, scientific Biblical criticism, nothing can eliminate the person of Jesus nor weaken the value of a single text which is spiritually true. If we attempt to prove that Jesus never lived, that He is a mere literary creation, an amalgam of Greek and Jewish thought, we have then to explain the Christian Church, and the dynamic of the personal revelation of Jesus in modern life. The fact is that the Bible is not apart from human history, but organic with it. The evidence for Jesus does

not rest upon the Gospels alone, it rests also upon the history of two thousand years, a history unintelligible and impossible apart from Him, and finally upon the living witness of the heart, a combined testimony which must increasingly vindicate the broad, substantial truth of the Gospel records.

> "So long," says Erskine of Linlathen, "as a man receives his Christianity merely on the authority of a church or a book—so long as it has not commended itself to the higher reason and moral sense or reached his inner consciousness—he has no real hold of Christianity; he is believing only in his church or in his book."

The correspondence of the conscience with the teaching of the Bible is its surest defence.

Freed from this entanglement we are at liberty in the pursuit of our message to consider *what Jesus has to say to the individual.* God is no longer an unknowable "first cause," but a Father who cares alike for each one of us, whose love is warm and personal, radiating outwards with continual activity, not different from human love save in its absolute purity, and the depth and range of its sympathy. Nothing shuts us out from the full benefit of that love but our own will. Repentance is the one condition of sonship and forgiveness. God must find in us some likeness to Himself before He can make Himself felt and known. To be at one with God, is to accept His love and to recognise His will as a governing principle. We must, therefore, turn towards Him and view life in some measure as He views it, hating indifference, sloth, impurity, and selfishness as He hates them. There must be some point of contact between our souls and His, and to secure this we must cut down the hedge of prickly cactus which sin has reared about the soul. Or, to put it more accurately, His pierced hands cannot break through to draw us out until we on our side of the fence begin the work of pulling down. If we will do this His response is instant, even when it is not recognised, for His love is unsleeping in its continual watch to seek an entry

in the heart for which it yearns. Some regard this view of the Divine relationship as too easy. Sin, they say, must be punished before God can forgive. Eternal Justice must be satisfied. The answer is complete, there *is* punishment. Justice *is* satisfied and this without any legal figment. Sin, not as a theory but as a metter of fact, carries its own punishment with it. Repentance is not a trivial or easy matter, it involves the tearing up of evil growths by the roots, and often, alas, a torn and bleeding heart. Repentance implies not only the joy and peace of surrender, the escape to a quiet haven from a sea of storms, but the sharp pain of acknowledged shortcomings, the bitterness of remorse for wasted years.

It is in relation to this fact, to the terrible hold of sin upon human nature, of the magnitude of the moral effort which repentance often involves, that the personal message of a suffering Redeemer has its supreme importance.

"All that is fair and beautiful," says Mrs Besant, "in Christian morality has been taught in the world ages before Christ was born." That may be more or less true, but the statement misses the point. Some seem to imagine that the soul of truth can exist in unvarying definiteness without a body of historic fact, without an embodiment, a witness, a type of the truth. Matthew Arnold hints at the real need of humanity when he says:—"A correct scientific statement of rules of virtue has upon the great majority of mankind simply no effect at all." Jesus did not come to contradict what had been truly said by others before his time, *He came to personify the truths they expressed.* The Gospel is not a mere code of morals, it is Jesus, and Jesus is Himself the dynamic of moral force. In Him God has spoken, in Him God lays bare His heart: He reveals love, He reveals sin, He shows us that there is no gulf of radical difference between His nature and our own. He shows us the possibilities of our life, exposes with merciless truth the barren emptiness of existence apart from Him, and pleads with tenderest

passion for the life union of the Divine harmony and love. Upon the cross, the witness to an eternal fact, the suffering inflicted upon the loving heart of the Father by the sin of the world is exposed in its true nature, and the appeal of God takes its most vibrant and urgent note.

As in the life of Christ the virtues of humility, meekness, sympathy, and purity receive the sanction of the Divine nature and are for ever identified with it, so upon the Cross the quality of the Divine self-sacrifice is revealed, and self-sacrifice for ever identified with God.

Here is the focus of the message of Jesus to the individual. It is at once a vivid illumination of the true issues before the soul, and an intense and urgent appeal from the heart of God to the heart of man, written, spoken in language man can understand.

From this appeal flow practical consequences. The life Jesus unfolds to the individual is not different for the state. The wars of international jealousy, the huge enginery of militarism, the selfishness of the rich, and the evils of poverty, are alike inconsistent with the higher civilisation to which Jesus calls us; they are alien and hostile to the nature and purpose of God.

I do not deceive myself by the supposition that in this statement of Christian truth I have put even a tithe of the objections which earnest doubt may have to offer. Points of view are so different, the deepest thoughts are so hard to express, that it would be impossible within the limits of a public lecture even to state, much less to anticipate (were that within my power), every intellectual difficulty, or to render exactly the different shades of meaning which words convey. At best words are but symbols. The term fatherhood as applied to God, and the term son as applied to Jesus, are for example symbolic of ideas which it is intended to associate with God and with Jesus, and to express the oneness in essence which runs from man up to God through Jesus, rather than to be interpreted as a scientific statement

of fact. Often those who have been separated from each other by the intellectual forms of their belief, and have perhaps discussed their differences with not a little of that unhappy temper which so often mars theological disputes, have been really quarrelling about a superficial difference due to the imperfections of human speech, and concealing a fundamental unity upon which fellowship might have been based.

Recognising these difficulties of mental *approchement* I must, nevertheless, assume for the sake of argument that we are agreed in the presentation of the Gospel which has just engaged us, and I pass, therefore, to the concluding question:—If these things be true, how may we appropriate their truth? What is the inner meaning of religion?

In discussing this question we shall, I think, find ourselves at length upon common ground. For although the diversities of individual outlook are great, the needs and experience of humanity are universal and the same.

Moreover, it is one thing to have clear intellectual views, another to be pure and unselfish. Clear views are an incalculable gain, they add to the efficacy of faith, but they are the means, not the end or object of faith. The end is neither philosophy nor theology, neither creed nor formula, but simply character redeemed and possessed by the power of love.

It is a great mistake to think that faith is exclusively or even mainly an affair of the head. It is mainly an affair of the heart, a question of the spiritual temper or attitude of the soul. As William Law expresses it in one of his essays, faith "is a living, working power of the mind, that wills, desires, and hopes, and trusts and believes and obeys." Aye, *obeys*. That is where our faith is weak. That is where we need the potency of the Gospel. We know better than we do. Perceiving the good we continually choose the evil.

Let us put the case as a matter of personal experience,

for we are here at the intensely personal centre of all religion. We are face to face with the question of personal salvation. I am, shall we say, the average man. I have none of the vices which shock public opinion or bring me under the penal laws framed by society to protect itself and its respectability. I have more or less, perhaps in a neutral fashion, the good esteem of my fellows. I pay my debts, live within my income, am indulgent to my family and—to myself. Every now and then I am stirred by something of which I read or hear, the distress of the unemployed or some peculiar case of trouble, and for a brief space am unusually charitable. I give a guinea, ten guineas, fifty guineas. I speak at a meeting. I attend a bazaar, and then by imperceptible degrees slip back into my normal forgetfulness. If anyone were to charge me with unorthodoxy I should be painfully shocked. I read the Bible, perhaps sometimes wondering what I have read five minutes afterwards. I go certainly once, perhaps under favourable circumstances twice, to church, chapel or meeting. I don't understand what is meant by the Trinity or the Atonement; I leave all that to the clergyman or the minister, but in a more or less definite way I believe that my earthly life is so irreproachable that my eternal future is sure to be pleasant. Christ, I say, is my Saviour, by which I mean (if I were ever so brutally frank with myself, which I am not) that He will leave me alone in this world, and save me in the next. So I go on. Now and then someone upon whose companionship I depend is called beyond the grave. On such occasions I am deeply touched. It is always hard to say good-bye to one's friends. I have solemn thoughts, not unmingled with self-pity. I feel stirred for a time to double my devotions. And then the tide of life, business and pleasure, flows in again. The gap is filled. I forget, and once more am satisfied to live on the surface. I flutter through the hours like a butterfly in a meadow—dipping aimlessly now here, now there. But let us suppose that the strong blow of some great catastrophe were to

smite me. Something that destroyed the routine of self-pleasing and compelled me to face the realities which I have so steadfastly shirked. Let it be some permanent physical restriction like blindness, or some financial disaster involving penury—no matter what. Where do I stand now? What is there in this life of mine that is real, what is there that carries comfort with it through the long years yet to come? Little or nothing. I have spent my life for things that have irrecoverably passed with time. They cost me much once, they are worth nothing to me now. Everything is bitter, life and the interminable future are desolate. Suddenly I realise that my Christ was a lay figure. I made him and draped him myself. I realise that at the heart of what I call my religion was but selfishness, that my faith was self-deception, and that my insincerity has brought upon me the doom of spiritual emptiness. I have nothing to carry me with hope and confidence through the gates of death. "The heresy of all heresies," says William Law, "is the worldly spirit." There are tens upon tens of thousands of such heretics, living upon make-belief and taking it for belief. God save us from lives like theirs, from good-natured indifference, the indolence of slumbrous souls!

But how are we to be saved? How are we to realise the Christ of our Gospel? "If a man be sincere," says a recent writer, "then his sincerity is the hammer that drives his belief home, and the stronger the sincerity the deeper will the practical point of the belief penetrate into his life and conduct." Beyond all question a first consideration is sincerity, the sincerity born, for example, of conviction for sin and the desire for pardon. We must honestly seek the true life, we must honestly wish to escape the toils of self-love. Assume this sincerity. Assume for example that I have grown dissatisfied with a drifting life, that I have felt a touch of that satiety which is the scourge of the worldling. How then am I to set about the business of salvation? I turn to Christ, the Christ of the Gospels. What

is salvation by Christ? It is nothing mysterious, it is to be made like unto Him. Again I quote from William Law:—

> "Wherever thou goest, whatever thou dost, at Home or Abroad, in the Field, or at Church, do all in a desire of union with Christ, in Imitation of His Tempers and Inclinations, and look upon all as nothing, but that which exercises and increases the Spirit and Life of Christ in thy Soul. From morning to night keep Jesus in thy Heart, long for Nothing, desire Nothing, hope for Nothing, but to have all that is within thee changed into the Spirit and Temper of the Holy Jesus. Let this be thy Christianity, thy Church and thy Religion. For this new Birth in Christ thus firmly believed and continually desired, will do everything that thou wantest to have done in thee; it will dry up all the Springs of Vice, stop all the workings of evil in thy Nature, it will bring all that is Good into thee, it will open all the Gospel within thee, and thou wilt know what it is to be taught of God."

Here we have the method, not only of the mystic, but of every soul who has sought God through Christ. It is the method of experiment. The test of the Christian life from the inside. A cathedral window is ugly enough until you look through it from within, and then the dull leaded glass with its meaningless contortions of device, flashes into ordered beauty. Moreover, it is an experiment which again and again has vindicated the method, in the evolution of character fragrant with peace and love, breathing the benediction of holy calm upon the fever of a restless heart.

But we must know the steps of this pilgrim's progress. Let me state the case again in terms of personal experience. I determine to seek this peace of God till I find it. My sincerity is not to be doubted. I am earnest in my quest. So far so good. I have the first condition requisite. I am willing to pull down the prickly cactus hedge of my sins. I realise that self is the devil's workshop. I want to get away from the prison of my selfishness. I want to realise love. But I am not going to do it by mere mortifications and penances. In my desire to practise self-sacrifice I am in danger of confounding the mutilated life of the ascetic

with the cross and discipline of Christ. I am right in thinking that the worldly life full of self-indulgence is a small and contemptible life, I am wrong in thinking that the Christian life consists merely in not doing things that other people do. The Christian life is not an empty garret but a palace beautiful by the side of which the life of the most sumptuous sybarite is a wretched hovel. Moreover, mortification of this sort breeds a judging temper and a spirit of pride. Self-sacrifice is self-realisation. I must approach my holy experiment from another side. I must seek not merely to lop off but to grow. I must acquire something I have not got. And here is a difficulty. In practical experience how am I to know what is meant by listening to the voice of Christ, obeying Him and following Him? How am I to identify the substance behind the current phrasing of the religious in my own inner consciousness? At first indeed there may be nothing to recognise, no intimation of Divine power, no distinct voice thrilling and commanding the soul, no presence before whom I instinctively kneel. No, perhaps not. But there is conscience, and conscience is a guide I can follow. For example! Be thoughtful of others, even in little things. Make a practice of forgetting yourself. In the past it was always *I*, what do they say and think of *me*, am *I* getting the recognition that is my due? Now let it be otherwise. Am I helping him, what can I do for him, what am I thinking of him? Am I giving him his due? Without cessation, in the intimacies of the home life or on the broader stage of public service, the choice between recognised alternatives recurs. Generally I know perfectly well which is the right choice. Some one angers me, insults me. I want to hit back, sting with a sharp repartee, crush with a jibe. I practise restraint. I return soft answers. And so I might illustrate at large. In every activity of life I might select instances to mark the steps of my pilgrim's progress.

But I cannot rest satisfied here. I seek not only discipline

but victory. I want to know not only conscience, but Christ. Yes, but to the sincere experimentalist, using his conscience as a guide, and seeking always to focus his life on that of Jesus Christ as he knows Him in the Gospels and recognises Him in His faithful disciples, there comes a time when the line between conscience and Christ grows very thin. There comes a time when the higher life of which I am always aware, and which I have tried to follow, becomes so merged in my thought of Christ and my devotion to Him, that I can hardly distinguish the two in my mind. There comes a time when suddenly I am on my knees, my whole soul flooded with light and love, tears in my heart and eyes, an unspeakable peace enfolding me. The pierced hands have reached through to me at last and draw me gently forth to Him. "Come unto me and rest," and I answer, Yea, for I am hid with Christ in God.

I have sketched, you say, a hypothetical career. No, it is a story from real life. You say I have spoken in mystical language. I answer, Yes, the supreme moment cannot be defined in the dry language of theology, nor can words express it. You say the experience is the result of mental suggestion practised over a term of years. I answer, No one believes that who has once been there and taken off his shoes on holy ground—the reality is too over-powering, the effect too profound. But is this the experience of everyone who tries the experiment? That question needs a careful answer. There are for example degrees in the sincerity and earnestness with which the experiment is pursued, and we must consider the great variety of temperament, no two individuals seeing life with the same eyes. I think the true answer is this, that the measure of God's response is the urgency and strength of our appeal, but it would be mischievous to assert that the character of the response always bears the same identity. I believe experience shows on the contrary that the character of the response is conditioned by individual

needs, though in its substance it must always be the same—the consciousness, more or less clear, of union with God in thought and action, of an eternal purpose and worth in human life, and of an all-embracing love. This union and sense of love, if experience be a guide, is strongest and deepest where the thought of God has been focused in the personality of Jesus Christ.

But perhaps I have made haste too fast. If I go back to my pilgrim I find in his experience something upon which I have not touched. It is not a smooth progress that he makes. His sincerity wavers before the fierce resistance of hereditary evil, ingrained selfishness, natural sloth. There are times when he cannot keep his eyes upon the Cross, when the goal upon which he set his heart grows dim, when the baser self yearns for the flesh pots of Egypt. How can he win through? There is only one way, the way of prayer. I do not mean formal praying, the rapid gabbling of the Lord's prayer, or the set petition for outward benefits. I mean the prayer of the sinful man crying from the depths of his great need, "Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me"; the prayer of the longing soul seeking to escape from the clog of fleshly imperfection and to breathe the free, pure air of the spiritual life. Such prayer to be potent must be personal, it must throb with the conviction of human helplessness and of God's power to save, it must spring from a heart in which deep emotion has broken the reserve of pride. And while in its supreme expression such prayer may be only occasional, victory will be finally won only by the continuous cultivation of the prayerful spirit. In the spiritual athlete prayer becomes a habit of mind, not a spasmodic exercise. It becomes indeed the sign-manual of the soul's intimacy with God.

Amid the feverish activities of these modern days, when the loud-voiced interests of the world stun the ear, may we seek by devotional exercise in the private sanctuary of

the home, no less than in public worship, to realise the saving love of God. And as we turn our thoughts inward to face the solemn realities of eternal life, may the light of God's holiness reveal our sin as He sees it, that knowing our weakness we may seek His strength, and pray the Father whom Jesus has shown us, to take us as children by the hand and lead us into His everlasting truth, by the way of service and a life of love freely given.

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